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A CENTURY
OF
BIRMINGHAM LIFE.

A CENTURY
OF
BIRMINGHAM LIFE:
OR, A
CHRONICLE OF LOCAL EVENTS,
FROM 1741 TO 1841.

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
JOHN ALFRED LANGFORD, LL.D.

Second Edition.

VOL. 1.

BIRMINGHAM:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. G. MOORE & Co., 53, HIGH STREET,
1870.

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DEDICATION.

To

SAMUEL TIMMINS,

WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF OLD BIRMINGHAM

. IS EQUALLED BY FEW;

AND WHOSE DESIRE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF

MODERN BIRMINGHAM

IS SURPASSED BY NONE,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED, BY HIS FRIEND,

J. A. LANGFORD.

PREFACE.

THIS book is simply what it professes to be, a compilation. It appeared to me—and friends, on whose judgments I could rely, agreed with me—that it would be more interesting and useful to let our forefathers speak for themselves, than to tell their story in other words. In almost all cases, therefore, I have quoted the advertisements, paragraphs, and reports literally. It would have been a much easier task to have given the substance of these extracts in my own words; but the object and intention of the book would not have been effected by such a proceeding. Every one acquainted with literary work knows that it is less labour to read and make an abstract of a report than tediously to copy it *ipsissima verba*. I mention this in self-justification. It was not to spare my own pain and toil that the plan of giving as much matter as possible in extracts was adopted, but in order to present to the reader the picture of the town, its people, and their life, even in their habits as they lived.

Some may object that the extracts sometimes relate to trifling subjects. It must, however, be remembered, such is happily the variety of people's tastes and pursuits that things which appear trifles to some, are interesting and important to others. The true picture of the life of

a town will include tragedy and farce ; things grave and gay ; trifles light as air, and subjects of the deepest importance ; for of such endless variety is life composed. A complete picture of Birmingham for a hundred years could not be painted without including each shade of its many-coloured and varied existence.

It only remains for me here to discharge the grateful duty of acknowledging my obligations. My first and warmest thanks are due to the Proprietors of *Aris's Gazette*, who have generously given me the free and unrestricted use of the unique and complete file of their paper, without which this compilation would never have been thought of, and could never have been made. The early numbers of the *Gazette* contain the only record we possess of many important local events, and without them an accurate and perfect history of the town could not be written.

To Mr. SAMUEL TIMMINS my obligations are so numerous that I scarcely know how to discharge them. His unequalled collection of Birmingham books, and his unequalled knowledge of Birmingham past and present, have been placed entirely and unreservedly at my disposal. With a spirit of generosity and self-denial rarely equalled and never surpassed he has rendered me every assistance in his power, and the reader is indebted to his large knowledge for many curious and illustrative passages. To Mr. TOULMIN SMITH my warmest thanks are also due. He has helped me in many ways, and furnished me with much valuable information. His love for his native town, and his desire to aid all undertakings which affect her interest, are well known. In the humblest as well as in the most important labours for the benefit of Birmingham, his co-operation is never asked in vain. Since the publication of the first edition of

this work, Literature has lost a learned and conscientious labourer, and Birmingham a true friend, by the lamented death of Mr. TOULMIN SMITH. I have, also, to thank Mr. SEBASTIAN EVANS, M.A., Mr. BROOKE SMITH, Mr. W. R. HUGHES, Mr. HUBERT LATHAM, Mr. JOHN RABONE, jun., and Mr. FREDERICK PRICE, for much valuable assistance.

To the members of my own household, who have so industriously and unweariedly helped me in the tedious and irksome labour of transcription, my thanks are also due.

Birmingham, November, 1867.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE derivation of the word Birmingham has been the source of considerable controversy ; and has afforded “gentle dulness” one of its favourite occupations. Hutton’s etymological knowledge was of the most limited nature, and a common corruption in pronouncing the word led our genial old gossip astray. He tells us that the “original seems to have been *Bromwych* : *Brom*, perhaps, from broom, a shrub, for the growth of which the soil is extremely favourable : *Wych*, a descent ; this exactly corresponds with the declivity from the High Street to Digbeth.” Having got his *Bromwych*, he has to account for the *ham*. This word being Saxon for home, he says, was added “probably, under the Saxon Heptarchy.” Thus the meaning of the word would be the home-on-the-descent-on-which-broom-grows. Unfortunately for this pretty theory, the old name was not *Bromwycham*, but *Bermingeham* or *Birmingham*, and therefore the prolific nature of the soil in producing broom has nothing to do with the name at all. A better, and, doubtless, the true derivation is given by Mr. James Freeman, in a letter published in the *Athenæum*, September 8, 1855. He says, “The word Birmingham is so thoroughly Saxon in its construction, that nothing short of positive historical evidence would warrant us in assigning any other than a Saxon origin to it. The final syllable, *ham*, means a home or residence and *Bermingas* would be a patronymic or family name, meaning the Berms (from *Berm*, a man’s name, and *ing* or *iung*, the young, progeny, race, or tribe). The word, dissected in this manner, would signify the

home or residence of the Birms; and there can be little question that this is its true meaning.”* We have here a rational etymology and meaning of the name of the town.

My friend, Mr. Sebastian Evans, has supplied me with the following remarks on the word Brummagem:—"The vernacular 'Brummagem' is," he says, "a variation of the word Birmingham, which seems to have most unnecessarily puzzled the etymologists. Bermingeham is the spelling of Domesday, and there can be little doubt that the *e* following the *g* signifies that the *g* was pronounced soft, as was frequently the case in the Midlands in words in which the *g* was elsewhere pronounced hard. The entire word would, therefore, be sounded as Bérminjam, which swiftly spoken, slides naturally in the mouth of a Midlander into Bremijam or 'Brummagem.' Precisely the same phenomenon presents itself in the case of the name Bagot. One branch of the family, whether Midland or not I know not, thought fit to pronounce the *g* soft, and still writes itself Bagehot, sounded Bajot. A vast number of words were in the same way pronounced with the *g* hard or soft, according to the dialect prevalent in the district. Thus, springs are, in some parts of England, called springes, and hinges hings, and fifty more instances might easily be quoted. It is observable that the name Edgbaston presents another instance in point. Originally Edgbaston was 'Egbald's tun' or town, the *g* being pronounced soft according to Midland wont, giving rise to the modern form of the word.

"The literal meaning of the word Birmingham is 'the homestead of the sons of Birm' or Beorm, the Saxon form of the name which appears in the Norse Sagas as Biorn. Like Æsc, and several other names, Beorm seems to have been that of a mythic or semi-mythic personage, from whom a tribe of Saxons traced their descent. The Norse Sagas mention several such half deified Biorns, one of whom may perhaps have been identical with the Saxon Beorm from whom our forefathers traced their pedigree—the very one, perhaps, who makes no inconsiderable figure in Scandinavian tradition as 'Biorn the Merchant.'"

* The whole of this interesting letter is printed in the Appendix.

Although Birmingham may properly be considered a modern town, it has claims to antiquity which must not be ignored. We need not be bewildered by the speculations of Hutton, or misled by the curious pictures which some writers have drawn from their imaginations as to the size of the town, and the lives and occupations of its people in the time of the Britons. There is reason to believe that it was the site of a Roman station; and it is certain that one of the great Roman roads passed near the place. Remains of this permanent work are still to be traced in Icknield Port Road, and one of the most perfect fragments crosses the Coldfield at Sutton. That there was a hamlet here in very early times, called by the name which our more modern manufactures have made famous throughout the civilized world, is, happily, placed beyond a doubt. In that invaluable work of William the Conqueror, the Domesday Book, we read, that in the year 1086, "Richard holds of William (Fitz Ansculf) 4 hides in Bermingeham.* The arable employs 6 ploughs; 1 is in the demesne. There are 5 villeins, and 4 bordars with 2 ploughs. Wood half a mile long, and two furlongs broad. It was and is worth 20/." Nearly eight hundred years have passed since this official return was made, and the sparse and insignificant population has increased to nearly 350,000 persons. The place which "was and is worth 20/," has now property the annual rental of which is more than a million; and the little settlement on the banks of the River Rea has developed into a town of more than five miles in length, of three miles in breadth, and covering an area of upwards of 7,800 acres. It has now more than 200 miles of streets, which contain something like 60,000 houses. Many of the public buildings are noble structures in themselves, and nobler from the uses to which they are put. The most beautiful and important are the Free Grammar School of Edward VI., one of the earliest and most successful works of the late Sir Charles Barry; the Town Hall, the Midland Institute, and the Central Library. Although some of the churches and chapels are in the worst style of architecture, and have no

* There are at least 140 ways of spelling this word; these are given in the Appendix.

claim to beauty whatever, others, and especially some which have been erected of late years, are worthy of great praise, and are decided ornaments to the town and creditable to the skill of the architects. A marked improvement has also taken place in our street architecture, and numerous shops could be named which would bear comparison with those of any city in England.

In page 301 of this work is quoted the result of an accurate survey made of the town in 1785-6, in which the number of streets and houses is given "exclusive either of Deritend, or that part of the town called the Foreign." On this passage, my friend, Mr. Toulmin Smith, whose knowledge of the history of Birmingham is most extensive and accurate, has furnished me with the following very interesting information. He says:—"This is the latest instance that I am aware of in which the term 'Foreign' is used to describe a part of Birmingham. It is curious that this correct term should have gone entirely out of use in Birmingham, while in many other ancient towns in England it is still kept in common use. It was, formerly, always carefully used in descriptions of Birmingham. The town was always spoken of as consisting of (1) The 'Borough of Birmingham and Deritend,' and (2) The 'Foreign of Birmingham.' Both parts are within the Lordship or Manor of Birmingham. The 'Borough' was the older part of the town; and all of it, except Deritend, lies within the Parish of Birmingham. The 'Foreign' included Bordesley, large parts of Edgbaston, as well as a large part of the Parish of Birmingham itself. The defining line between the 'Borough' and the 'Foreign' could be now drawn without much difficulty, so numerous are the descriptions extant of the property in the place. It may be interesting to mention a few of these, as illustrations of a state of facts which will be new to most readers.

"The first which I will name makes it necessary to point out, by way of preface, one of the strange mistakes made by Hutton, in his History of Birmingham, unhappily, Hutton never gives his authority for any statement; so it is impossible to know how much was copied and how much was guess-work. Whichever it was that inspired his account of

Edward Birmingham, the last of his race, almost every statement made by Hutton about that unfortunate gentleman is wrong. Among the rest are the two important items of his birth and his marriage. Hutton says that he was the son of WILLIAM Birmingham,—while in fact he was the son of NICHOLAS Birmingham. Hutton adds, that Edward ‘married Elizabeth, widow of William Ludford,’—whereas, in point of fact, Edward was twice married: first, to Margaret, daughter of Gerard Danett, Esq.; secondly, to Elizabeth, daughter of the ‘right worshipful Sir William Lytleton, Knight.’ And this second wife, Elizabeth, after the death of Edward Birmingham (which took place within two years after the terrible blow of the confiscation of his estate), married Ludforde as her second husband. Having thus set straight these facts, I have to add that, on 15th February, A.D. 1522, Edward Birmingham, having then lately married his second wife, made a settlement in favour of ANNE, his daughter by his first wife. And the point for which I now refer to these matters is, that the payment of the sums of money thus settled on this daughter, is expressly secured, by this settlement, upon pastures and meadows ‘*in the Foreign of Birmingham*’; the names and tenants of each of which are duly given in the original Deed.

“After the iniquitous affair by which Edward Birmingham was robbed of his inheritance, accounts were annually sent up, describing the tenancies and the rents within the manor. I have examined all of these. Copies of two of them are before me while I now write. In one of them (A.D. 1536) the description of the tenancies in the ‘*Foreign*’ fills more than twelve closely written quarto pages. In another (A.D. 1544) the description of the same fills nine still more closely written pages. In both, the ‘*Foreign*’ is particularly distinguished from ‘*The Borough of Birmingham and Deritend.*’

“In 1545 the Manor of Birmingham was granted, by Letters Patent, to Lord Lysle. The grant describes the property of the Manor in detail; and the same distinction is drawn in these Letters Patent, between the lands in the ‘*Foreign*’ of Birmingham, and those in ‘*The Burgh of Birmingham and Deritend.*’

"The exact accounts, still extant, of the possessions and rents of the Gild of the Holy Cross of Birmingham, observe the same distinction; and this distinction is further found in the Letters Patent (often erroneously called 'Charter') which endowed the Free Grammar School with part of the possessions of the Gild of the Holy Cross. Those Letters Patent enumerate, among other things, 'all those lands, fields, meadows, pastures, and hereditaments, whatsoever, with the appurtenances, called or known by the name or names of Long-Croft, Bynges, Rotton-Fields, Walmores, and Saint Mary Wood, lying and being in the *Foreign* of Birmingham aforesaid,' These properties are still in the possession (*pace* Railways) of the Governors of the Free School, and can be readily identified.

"The few facts which I have thus thrown together are well worth preserving. In the hurry and bustle of modern 'progress,' Birmingham men are too apt to forget that Birmingham is one of the most ancient towns in England; and is a town that has always flourished, from and during the time when every description marked the 'Foreign of Birmingham' from the 'Borough of Birmingham and Deritend,' down to our own days, when the 'BOROUGH' has swallowed up, in its capacious maw, every trace, except in still living street names of the ancient 'FOREIGN.'"

Birmingham was early famous for the mechanical skill and industry of the people. After Domesday Book, the earliest mention of the town is by Leland, and he alludes at the same time to the prettiness of the place, and to the extent of its manufactures. He visited the town in 1538, and entered in his Itinerary this often quoted account of Birmingham three hundred and thirty years ago:—

"I came through a pretty street, or ever I entred, into Bermingham towne. This street, as I remember, is called Dirtey. In it dwell smithes and cutlers, and there is a brooke that divideth this street from Bermingham, and is an Hamlett, or Member, belonginge to the Parish therebye.

"There is at the end of Dirtey a propper chappell, and mansion* house of tymber, hard on the ripe, as the brooke runneth downe; and as I went through the ford by the

* Deritend Chapel and the Old Crown House. This chapel has the honour of being the first Reformation Chapel. See Mr. Toulmin Smith's interesting book, "The Old Crown House."

bridge, the water ran downe on the right hand, and a few miles lower goeth into Tame, ripa dextra. This brooke, above Dirtey, breaketh in two armes, that, a little beneath the bridge, close again. This brooke riseth, as some say, four or five miles above Bermingham, towards Black Hilles.

"The beauty of Bermingham, a good markett towne in the extreame parts of Warwike-shire, is one street going up alonge, almost from the left ripe of the brooke, up a meane hill by the length of a quarter of a mile. I saw but one Parroch Church in the towne. There be many smiths in the towne that use to make knives and all mannour of cuttinge tooles, and many loriners that make bittes, and a great many naylor. Soe that a great part of the towne is maintained by smithes, who have their iron and sea-coal out of Staffordshire."*

Camden, the well-beloved teacher of "rare Ben Jonson," visited the town somewhere between 1576 and 1586, for, in the latter year, his famous work was published. In his "Britannia" we have the following brief, but highly creditable notice of Birmingham as it was nearly three hundred years ago. He says, "To proceed hence [Kenilworth], as I took my own route, I came next to Solyhill [Solihull], which has nothing remarkable but its church; then to Bremicham, *swarming with inhabitants, and echoing with the noise of anvils*, (for here are great numbers of smiths). The lower part of the town is very watery. The upper part rises with abundance of handsome buildings; and it is none of the least honours of the place, that from hence the noble and warlike family of Bremichams in Ireland had their original and name." In 1690, Alexander Missen, in his travels, says, he saw, at Milan "Fine works of Rock Crystal, Swords, Heads for Canes, Snuff Boxes and other fine works of steel; *but they can be had cheaper and better at Birmingham.*" This early reputation she has not only maintained, but so far increased as to occupy one of the highest places amongst the industrial towns of the world. In 1777, Edmund Burke said he looked "upon Birmingham to be the great Toy Shop of Europe." And notwithstanding the rapid progress made by other places in manufactures since the great orator and statesman uttered these words, Birmingham still maintains its own pre-eminence, and may even now be fitly looked upon as the great Toy Shop of Europe.†

* Leland; Second Edition, by Thomas Hearne, M.A., Oxford, 1745, v. 4, p. 108.

† We refer those readers who wish to trace the wonderful growth of the trades and industry of the town to the very able and interesting volume "Birmingham and the Midland Hardware Districts," edited by Mr. Samuel Timmins.

From this skill in mechanical labour has come one of the greatest stains on the manufacturing history of the town. The same ingenuity which produced the inimitable dies for medals, was equally capable of producing the dies for base coin ; and in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Birmingham was especially noted for this kind of manufacture. So wide spread was her fame in this respect that her name became a synonym for anything which pretended to be what it was not. The literature of the Restoration affords us numerous examples of this unenviable reputation. A good deal of this abuse was due to the part which the inhabitants had taken against the king in the civil war. The Stuarts and the Cavaliers looked upon Birmingham with no friendly feelings, and nothing was bad enough to be said of the town which Prince Rupert had burned. So far as our coining practices were concerned there was little cause for respectful consideration. They produced too much trouble to the local authorities, and were too injurious to the state, either for excuse or defence. We certainly deserved all we got of infamous notoriety as the manufacturers of base and counterfeit coin.

Dryden, in his address to the Reader, in the first part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, says, "The longest chapter in Deuteronomy has not curses enough for an anti-Bromingham." In Sir Walter Scott's note to this passage we read that "Birmingham was already noted for base and counterfeit coin. In a Panegyrick on their Royal Highnesses, congratulating their return from Scotland, 1682, mention is thus made of Shaftesbury's medal :—

"The wretch that stamped it got immortal fame ;

'Twas coined by stealth, like groats at Birmingham.

Tom Brown also alluded to the same practice ; in his *Reasons for Mr. Bayes' (Dryden) changing his Religion*, 'I coined heroes as fast as Birmingham groats.' The affected zeal of the country party for the protestant religion led them to be called Birmingham Protestants, while the pretensions of Monmouth to legitimacy led his adversaries to compare him to a spurious impression of the king's coin ; and thus

Birmingham became a term of reproach for him, his assumed title, and his faction in general. There are numerous allusions to this in the libels of the age. Thus in 'Old Jemmy, an Excellent new Ballad,'

"Old Jemmy is the top
And chief among the princes ;
No mobile gay fop
With Birmingham pretences.

"In another ballad bearing the same title, the same phrase occurs :—

"Let Whig and Bermingham repine,
They shew their teeth in vain ;
The glory of the British line,
Old Jemmy's come again.

"These are in Mr. Luttrell's collection ; where there is another Tory song, entitled 'A proper new Birmingham Ballad, to the tune of Hey, Boys, Up Go We.'

"In another Grubstreet performance, entitled 'A Medley on the Plot, by Mathew Taubman :'

"Confound the hypocrites, Birminghams royal,
Who think allegiance a transgression ;
Since to oppose the King is counted loyal,
And to rail high at the succession.

* * * * *

Let them boast of loyal Birminghams, and true,
And with these make up their kirk of separation ;
We have honest Tory Tom, Dick and Hugh,
Will drink on, and do more service to the nation.

North, however, gives rather a different derivation."

In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, July, 1757, the following illustrative poem appeared :—

UPON A BIRMINGHAM HALFPENNY.

Hence ! false, designing cheat, from garret vile
Or murky cellar sprung ! thy spurious birth
And mix'd embrace thy pallid hue proclaims.
Thrust thou 'mongst those of pure and generous stamp,
To pass unknown, and by dissembling face
And mimic form, to gull me, credulous,

I mark'd thee 'midst thy betters, and with eye
 Distinguishing arrested thy deceit !
 Dar'st thou confront the envied worth thou ap'st
 Confess'd to open day ? Come forth to view ;
 Nought will avail thy name and face assumed
 And regal head with *George's* laurel bound :
 Thy telltale paleness speaks thee counterfeit.
 Lives there a beggar wretch, with hunger prest,
 Would take thee offered ? Thou art known so well,
 The honest tradesman will not sell thee wares.
 The gawky clown, too late, alas ! has found
 He took a sharper when he harbour'd you.
 I've got thee safe ; no more expect to thrive
 By cheating innocence ; in durance firm
 I'll fix thee, to deter thy bastard race.
 Thus many a harvest, by deceit and fraud,
 The cunning juggler thrives ; till, by success,
 He grows less cautious, nor to wheedling maids
 By promis'd sweethearts, he his art confines ;
 But in ill-fated hour attempts to trick
 More knowing townsmen ; they averse to frauds,
 Or take his greasy galligaskins down,
 And birchen smart inflict ; or shut in cage,
 To curse his fortunes and atone his crimes.

The ill-directed ingenuity which procured for the town its nickname, and gave to all things which pretended to be what they were not the questionable title of "Brumagem," was displayed in other ways than in making counterfeit coin. Mr. M. D. Hill gives a curiously illustrative anecdote of this corrupt practice in the once important branch of industry, the Buckle trade :—"In the days," he writes, "when buckles were an important branch of trade in Birmingham, large quantities were made of a white alloy, bearing some slight resemblance to silver popularly called 'soft tommy.' The workmanship was on a par with the material. Each was so thoroughly vile that the artizans, though well drilled in such contemptible handicraft, were for once ashamed of the products of their labour. A manufacturer, it is said, entered a workshop unseen by his men, heard one of them, who had just finished a buckle, throw it down with a hearty curse on the wearer who was to

be. 'Why this profanity, and why imprecations on our customers?' was the master's natural enquiry. 'Because,' answered the man, 'I am sure he'll curse the maker as soon as he puts it on, and so I made up my mind to be beforehand with him.' "§

With the exception of that fatal period in our history, when all the nation was mad on the subject of the French Revolution, Birmingham has always been liberal in politics. The people were especially earnest and zealous on the side of Parliament in its struggle against the tyranny of Charles I. In 1642, the King passed through the town just before the first battle of the civil war, at Edge-hill, and Clarendon gives this brief record of how the people received him, and his own opinion of their character in consequence :—"So that at Bromicham, a town so generally wicked, that it had risen upon small parties of the King's, and killed or taken them prisoners, and sent them to Coventry, declaring a more peremptory malice to his majesty than any other place."† The noble historian finds another opportunity to remark on the unspeakable wickedness of this ultra-Parliamentary town. Prince Rupert with his forces were ordered to Lichfield, and Clarendon tells us "In his way thither he was to march through Bromwicham, a town in Warwickshire beforementioned, and of as great a fame for hearty, wilful, affected disloyalty to the king, as any place in England."‡ The zeal of the inhabitants was, however, displayed in a much more useful and effective manner than rising upon small parties of the king's forces. The "smiths," of whom Leland and Camden found such a number in their respective visits, had increased, and now offered their skill for the service of the Parliament; and it is said by a contemporary that they made no fewer than 15,000 swords for the use of the army. As is well known, this zeal for the popular cause drew upon the town the vengeance of the fiery Prince Rupert. Early in 1643, that Royalist commander, who never came "but to conquer or to fall," was sent by

* Address delivered at the Midland Institute, September 30, 1867.

† Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, v. 3, p. 276, 1826 edition.

‡ Clarendon, v. 4, p. 31.

the king with 2,000 men to open a communication between Oxford and York, in which attempt he was vigorously opposed by our townsmen. The Prince halted on a piece of open country, which obtained in consequence, and, although now crowded with houses, still bears the name of Camp Hill. From this Camp, on Easter Monday, April 3, 1643, the Prince assaulted, sacked, and burned the town; and although the veracious historian of the "Rebellion" dismisses the subject in a few sentences, we have fortunately some contemporaneous publications which give a detailed account of this very important event in our history. Within a month of its occurrence three reports were published, two of which give a rather minute description of the scenes which displayed what is called in one of the tracts, "Rupert's Burning Love to England." The first of these is called "A Letter, written from Walsall by a worthy Gentleman to his friend in Oxford concerning Birmingham;" and bears the date "Walshall, April 5, 1643," so that it was written immediately after the attack upon the town. It is evidently from the pen of a Cavalier. The other two are as undoubtedly the productions of zealous Roundheads. Their titles are among the curiosities of literature. One is called :—

A true relation of Prince Rupert's barbarous cruelty against the Towne of Birminghame, to which place, on Monday, April 3, 1643, he marcht with 2000 horse and foot, 4 Drakes and 2 Sakers; who, after two hours fight, being twice beaten off by the Townsmen (in all but 140 Musqueteers,) he entered, put divers to the sword, and burnt about 80 houses to ashes, suffering no man to carry away his goods, or quench the fire, and making no difference between friend or foe; yet, by God's providence, the greatest loss fell on the malignants of the Town. And of the Cavaliers were slaine divers chief Commanders, and men of great quality, amongst whom was the Earl of Denbigh, the Lord John Stuart, and, as themselves report, the Lord Digby. London: Printed for John Wright, in the Old Baily, April 12, 1643."

The other partakes of the character of an official document, as it was "published at the request of the Committee at Coventry." I quote the full title :—

"Prince Rupert's burning love to England, discovered in Birmingham's flames; or, a more exact and true narration of Birmingham's Calamities under the barbarous and inhumane Cruelties of Prince Rupert's forces. Wherein is related how that famous and



THE LIFE OF THE LATE HON. JAMES SPENCER PERCIVAL

LONDON: J. B. LACKINGTON, 1840

well affected Town of Birmingham was unworthily opposed, insolently invaded, notoriously robbed and plundered, and most cruelly fired in cold blood the next day by Prince Rupert's forces. Together with a number of Prince Rupert's forces, his considerable persons slaine or mortally wounded; their many and abominable carnages in and after the taking of the Towne. The small strength which Birmingham had to maintain their defence, the names of their men slaine, the number of houses burned, and persons thereby destitute of habitation; with divers other considerable passages. Published at the request of the Committee at Coventry, that the kingdom may timely take notice what is generally to be expected if the cavalier's insolences be not speedily crushed."

"*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*"—Prov. xii, 10.

"London: Printed for Thomas Underhill, 1643.

"[May 1.]"

The Walsall gentleman ascribes the act to the disloyalty of the people. "I find," he says, "that the inhabitants of that Towne were they who first stirred up those of *Coventry* to resist the King, and that about 300 from thence went into *Coventry* to defend it against the King's Forces, that from thence they sent 15,000 Swords for the Earle of Essex his Forces, and the ayd of that Party, and not onely refused to supply the King's Forces with Swords for their money, but imprisoned divers who bought Swords, upon suspicion that they intended to supply the King's Forces with them." This authority tells us that the Prince intending to take up his quarters in this town, sent word that if he and his forces were received quietly, the inhabitants should "suffer no injury." They, however, opposed him in every way, fired upon his men, "and with opprobrious speeches reviled them, calling them *Cursed doggs, develish Cavaliers, Popish Traytors.*"

The second tract consists of two letters, the first dated "Coventry, April 8, 1643," and signed "R. P.," the other without date, and signed "R. G." The R. P. is clearly R. Porter, a sword blade manufacturer of the town, and one who had doubtless supplied the Parliamentary army with weapons. In his letter, after having described the assault upon and the burning of the town, he says, "For pillage but of little I lost, having obscured the things I had of any value; and for fire, God

did marvellously prevent, both to me and many others, whereat the malignants are so enraged that they have since *pulled down my Mill*, and pretend that Prince Rupert so commanded, and threaten to pull down my house and divers others, which I think they dare not, lest they build it up againe, the Country having sent them admonition of their insolency." This mill is identified by the following passage from the tract entitled "Prince Rupert's burning Love, &c." "Sithence," that is after the town had been burned, "they have caused one Mr. *Porter's* Blademill in the town to be pulled down, wherein sword blades were made and imployed, onely for the service of the Parliament, and so they were informed (which cost erecting about 100*l.*) threatening if it were not pulled downe, the rest of the Towne should be burnt. For now they begin to be great Agents in Fire-Workes."

We may picture to ourselves what kind of man Mr. Porter was; an earnest, God-fearing Puritan, who even for money would not make swords for the Royalists, a fact which some living manufacturers would do well to ponder over. He was one of Cromwell's men who "had a conscience in their work." His nobly pious way of looking at things will be gathered from a short extract from his short letter. "Though," he says, "they intended to burne the Towne utterly, as may be known by their laying lighted match, with powder and other combustible matter at the other end, which fired in divers places, and divers was found out and prevented, so that we may truly say, that the flames, swords, pilledgers, but especially the prison, made a difference betwixt those that feared God, and those that feared him not. But this is remarkable in their vilenesse, that all these houses, saving two, were fired in cold blood, at their departure, wherein they endeavoured to fire all, and in the flames they would not suffer the people to carry out their goods, or to quench it, triumphingly with reproaches rejoiced that the wind stood right to consume the Town, at which present the Lord caused the winds to turn, which was a token of his notice of their insultation." We gladly and gratefully accept R. Porter as one of the almost forgotten worthies of old Birmingham.

The third track is so brief, and gives such a graphic report of this notable event in our history, that I have been induced to reproduce it entire in the Appendix.

An incidental allusion to the notoriety of Birmingham in the time of the Commonwealth appears in a work called Nelson's Collections, published in 1682. The frontispiece of vol. 1 contains a figure of his Satanic Majesty whispering in the ear of a double-faced zealot, trampling on the Bible with a cloven foot, who is thus referred to in the verse explaining the "mind of the frontispiece":—

"Now turn your eye to the busie Saint behind,
That Brummigham Uniter of Mankind,
With fiery breath he doth the cause promote ;
But o'er the Bible stamps his cloven foot."

The old anti-Stuart feeling remained with the town, and was again displayed at the "glorious Revolution" of 1688, the centenary of which was celebrated here in 1788 with great rejoicing.

The horrors of the French Revolution, and the popularity of George III., made the people of Birmingham, in common with the great majority of the nation, out-and-out "Church and King" men. The ignorance and bigotry of the masses at that sad period of our history made them the ready and willing tools of those who ought to have known better, and made possible the disgraceful and disastrous riots of 1791. In time, however, the inhabitants returned to their early love of freedom, and became, under Thomas Attwood, Joshua Scholefield, George Edmonds, Thomas Clutton Salt, and other well-known leaders, the chief supporters of the movement which ended in obtaining the Reform Bill of 1832. In this town was founded and organised the famous Political Union; and on New Hall Hill (now covered with buildings) were held those mighty meetings which had such a potent effect on Parliament, and led to the triumph of the "good old cause." True to their early instincts and principles, the inhabitants have supported all the great measures of progress which distinguish the last half century of our history.

The voice of Birmingham was in favour of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, the admission of Jews into Parliament, and the policy of Free Trade. For many years now no Church Rate has been levied in the parish of Birmingham, and in the agitation for Reform, which has resulted in the passing of the bill of 1867, the energy and pertinacity of the inhabitants, especially of the working classes, have revived the memory of the scenes which preceded the great victory of 1832. The influence of the town in obtaining this bill, and in making it worthy of the acceptance of the nation, has been at least equal to that of any other town in the kingdom. As the crowning glory of this series of good works, it should be mentioned that the people are almost unanimous in their demand for a system of National Education, which we trust and believe will be one of the earliest labours of the Reformed Parliament.

It is generally stated, and as generally believed by those who find it easier to accept an opinion than to make enquiries, that Birmingham has not been sufficiently alive to the advantages of education. This, like so many charges, will, upon examination, be found to be utterly groundless. That we have not yet produced any great author, poet, or painter is, perhaps, true; but it is also true that we have been earnestly employed in giving instruction to the people ever since the nation began to understand its duty on this important question. The Blue Coat School was founded as early as 1724; and for nearly one hundred and fifty years has been engaged in the noble work of giving a good, sound education to orphans, or the children of parents whose poverty and misfortunes render it almost impossible that they should be able to discharge this, the most important of parental duties. Sunday Schools were opened at Gloucester, at the end of 1781 or the beginning of 1782; and in 1784 they were opened in Birmingham. Mechanics' Institutes were founded in 1823; and one was opened

in Birmingham, on March 21, 1826. When this had done its work—and a noble work it was—and passed away, the Polytechnic Institution succeeded it. This was in 1843. For a few years the new institution struggled through a rather weakly existence; for it never possessed the vigorous strength which, for many years, characterised the Mechanics' Institute. This, too, passed away; and, in November, 1855, the late Prince Albert laid the foundation stone of the present Midland Institute, which, in its industrial department, now numbers upwards of a thousand students. Within its walls any working man, or working woman either, who has the desire, united with the necessary industry and persistence, can obtain a first-class education, either literary or scientific. Birmingham has also adopted the Free Libraries and Museums Act, and, in 1861, the first of these excellent institutions was opened in Constitution Hill. Since that time three other branch libraries have been added, one in Deritend, one at Gosta Green, and a third at Adderley Park. A Central Reference and Lending Library, has been built in Ratcliff Place, at a cost of nearly, if not over, £13,000. The Lending Library, together with its admirable Reading Room, were opened by Mr. Henry Wiggin, then mayor, on September 6, 1864, when an inaugural address was delivered by Lord Stanley. The Reference Library, which is by far the finest room of any of the free libraries in the kingdom, and contains about 18,000 volumes of the best works in all literatures, was opened by Mr. E. Yates, Mayor, October 26, 1866, when Mr. George Dawson, M.A., delivered an inaugural address. To the Central Library is also added an Art Gallery, which, we trust, contains the germs of a noble and useful collection of the Fine Arts. The use which the people make of these libraries may be gathered by the following summary taken from the Annual Report of the Free Libraries Committee for 1866. In that year the Reference Library had been open only 54 days, and the total issues to readers reached 11,468, being a daily average of 2,123 volumes. The

Central Lending Library contains over 12,000 volumes; up to the end of 1866, 7,148 persons had qualified as borrowers; the total number of issues during the year was 164,120, or a daily average of 588.2. The Constitution Hill Library contains some 8,000 volumes, the total issue was 36,747, or daily average, 142. The Deritend Library contains over 5,000 volumes; in 1866 it was only open fifty-one days, and the total issue was 8,622, a daily average of 165. In the Adderley Park Branch there are between 2,000 and 3,000 books, the total issue was 9,383, or a daily average of about 26 volumes. This branch is only open after six o'clock in the evening; and the Gosta Green branch is not yet opened. The popularity of these institutions, and the interest which the people take in reading may be gathered from the fact that during 1866 the various libraries contained some 46,000 volumes, from which were issued the large number of 230,340, or a daily average of 1,133. The issues of 1867 will be very greatly in excess of this number. It should also be added that to each library is attached a news and reading room, and that the attendance throughout the day, especially at meal times and in the evening, is very large, the rooms being often inconveniently crowded. It will thus be seen that ample provision is made for the reading tastes of the inhabitants, and that they avail themselves of that provision in a most satisfactory and encouraging manner.

To these sources of popular education must be added the noble foundation of Edward VI., and its branch schools. The beneficial influence which these have had upon the town cannot be exaggerated, and they are still the most important of our educational institutions, reaching, as they do, almost all classes of society. The Queen's College, founded in 1843, has, in the past time, been of great service to the cause of education, and it is hoped that, under its new organisation, a brighter future awaits this much perplexed and long suffering institution.

Birmingham has also no insignificant claims upon the gratitude of the civilised world. Her share in the development of the great instruments of prosperity and progress is surpassed by few cities in the Empire. It was here that Baskerville perfected his type casting, and published those "magnificent editions," which "went forth to astonish all the librarians of Europe."^{*} It was here that Dr. Priestley made those discoveries which earned for him "the title of the founder of Pneumatic Chemistry."[†] Here James Watt perfected the steam engine, which is, says Mr. Smiles, "without exception, the greatest invention of modern times," and which "has been instrumental in effecting the most remarkable revolution in all departments of industry that the world has ever seen." Here that Captain of Industry, Matthew Boulton, pursued his wonderful career, and gave the Birmingham manufactures the world-wide reputation which they have ever since retained. For "great as the genius, and invaluable as the inventions of James Watt were, they would have been wasted, but for the indomitable energy, the untiring hopefulness, and the commercial genius of Matthew Bolton. Where the timid and invalid inventor would have failed and have left his great discoveries to be revived when he had long departed, Matthew Boulton gave exactly the element of commercial success. His refined taste, his unbounded energy, his almost reckless profusion had made Soho famous even for its minor manufactures, but when the steam engine was added, its success was complete."[‡] Here William Murdock invented lighting by gas, and in 1802, in celebration of the peace of Amiens, Soho was brilliantly illuminated by this new power of light. Here, too, Thomas Attwood and his compeers laboured until they obtained the Reform Bill of 1832—a bill, which, whatever were its shortcomings, has had a most important influence in those great measures of legislation which have done so much to ameliorate the condition and to elevate the minds and aspirations of the people.

^{*} Lord Macaulay.

[†] Professor Miller.

[‡] S. Timmins.

And here, too, David Cox produced those glorious pictures which are the delight of all who have taste to admire the beautiful in art. Birmingham has indeed reason to be proud of the labours of her sons—her own, and those whom she has adopted.

To show how Birmingham has grown from the little “hardware village” to be one of the greatest and most important centres of manufacturing industry in the world, is the object of the present work.

The PLAN of BIRMINGHAM Survey'd in the Year 1731.



To
the Honourable
Edw: Digby & Will: Peryton Esq
Members of Parliament
for the County of Warwick

this Plate is humbly Dedicated
by their most obed: humble Serv: W. Woodcock



in the Year 1700 Birmingham contained 30 Streets, 200
Courts, and Alleys, 12504 Houses, 15032 Inhabitants, one
Church dedicated to St Martin & a Chappel to St John & a School
founded by Edward 6th also 2 Repenting Meeting Houses

the Survey of this Town from 1700 to 4 Year 1731
is as follows 25 Streets, 50 Courts & Alleys, 12522 Houses
8251 Inhabitants together with a new Church, Charity
School, Market Cross, & 2 Meeting Houses for a further account see p^{er} p^{er} p^{er}



A CENTURY OF BIRMINGHAM LIFE.

CHAPTER I.—1741-1751.

§ I. APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

IT is not an easy thing for an inhabitant of the present busy, thickly-populated Birmingham to form a correct picture of the town as it appeared in 1741. Only one hundred and twenty-five years have passed since that date, but during that time the little hardware village has grown into one of the largest, most energetic, industrious and enterprising of the towns in Great Britain. It is a subject of no light interest to trace the growth and development of such a place, to watch how, bit by bit, and through a long series of years, the town slowly encroached on the country; how our quiet, easy-going, steady and contented forefathers gave place to the restless, striving, and happily, discontented folk who dwell and labour in it at the present time. It is the object of this work to recall the past, and thus enable our readers to form a more distinct idea of the rapid growth of the town from almost a country village to its present far-stretching and still rapidly-expanding boundaries. Mr. M. D. Hill, on resigning the office of Recorder, which he had held for twenty-five years, said, in his letter to the Mayor, "the number of the inhabitants has doubled since the year 1839, and now comprises more than half the population of the county of Warwick, and has become in reality the 'Midland capital of the realm,'"

Luckily we have the materials at hand which enable us to give such a picture of the past. The files of *Aris's Gazette* extend to 1741, the year of its birth; and thus for a century and a quarter we have a complete record of the life and doings of the people of Birmingham. From this rich store-house, and other sources not generally available, we propose to select information respecting the habits, customs, amusements, and life of our ancestors. This work will be rather the material for a local history than the history itself. From a most careful inspection of the files of the paper we can confidently assert that no authentic history of the town can ever be produced unless they are used. No other source of information so rich and authentic is now extant; and we hope so completely to exhaust its riches that the future historian will only have to refer to its pages for verification of our extracts—should he decline to take them on trust.

In dealing with the large mass of material we shall adopt the following plan:—From 1741 to 1841 we purpose taking periods of ten years, and confine ourselves to quoting such passages as will illustrate the changes which have been made in the appearance of the town and the general life of the people. These quotations will be arranged in a connected and systematic manner, and illustrated by information obtained from other sources. These will be carefully indicated, and all our obligations faithfully acknowledged. So far as the *Gazette* can help anyone in tracing the changes which have taken place, the principal source of information is the advertising page. In the early numbers of the paper there is the merest modicum of local news. From the advertisements, then, we proceed to cull a few examples of the kind of houses which used to exist in what are now the most crowded and central parts of the town. On December 14, 1741, appeared the following advertisement:—

To be Lett, and entered upon at Christmas, in the High Street, Birmingham, A Very Good Accustom'd Inn, the Sign of the Hen and Chickens, with Stables, Brew-Houses, and all Conveniencies for Publick Business. Enquire at the said Inn. N.B.—*There is a very good Bowling Green joining to it.*

This, it will be seen, was in the High Street. It would be a difficult task to provide “a very good bowling green” to a house so situated now.

In June 13, 1743, we read that there is

To be Lett or Sold, The House, *with the Garden and Appurtenances*, late in the Possession of Mr. Hollins, Stone-Cutter, in Temple Street, Birmingham.

Enquire of Mr. Rann, Attorney; or of the said Mr. Hollins.

Here we have, also, two well-known Birmingham names, the descendant of one of them still living (and long may he live), and whose works of art have added, and are still adding, to the ornamentation of what a German traveller called the one-statued town.

Here is another advertisement, which appears in August of the same year :—

To be Lett and entered upon immediately Five Smith Shops, with a Ware Chamber, in the Backside behind the White Hart Inn in Digbeth-Street, Birmingham. Also a House fronting to the same Street.

Enquire of Mr. Joseph Careless, in Park-Street.

The White Hart Inn is still in the old place; but where are the five smith shops which, in 1743, were behind that old and famous hostelry?

We frequently find the Beast market referred to in these advertisements. It was held in High Street; Carr's Lane being directly opposite to it. In 1769 the Beast Market was removed to Dale End, and the Sheep and Pig Market to New Street, where they were held until 1817, when they were removed to their present more fitting and appropriate locality in Smithfield. Here is the first advertisement we have found in which the Beast Market is mentioned; it appeared in the *Gazette* of August 29, 1743 :—

To be Lett, in Birmingham, The Mitre Inn, in the Beast Market, completely repaired, with good Stabling, and large Cellars, and a Brewhouse, and a Chamber, over it in the Yard; a good Well, and other Convenience, fit for an Inn. To be enter'd upon immediately. Enquire of Mr. Holloway; or of Mr. Simcoe, Attorney-at-Law, in Birmingham.

But what shall we say of our next advertisement? It has quite a rural and picturesque air; and yet it relates to Temple Street. What contrast with the present aspect of the place is given in this advertisement. Imagine for a moment that in 1743* there was in this street "an entire garden, walled, and the walls covered with fruit trees, the garden 12 yards wide and 50 yards long from the front of the house,

* In a letter which I have received from Mr. Toulmin Smith on this paragraph, he says, "I myself remember Temple-street in much this state. My grandfather (Edward Smith) lived in a house there, the description of which precisely corresponds, as to house and garden, with your advertisement. I well remember the 'Terrace Walk.'"

and extending 22 yards wide for 26 yards further." There is also a "pleasant terrace walk and summer-house, with sashed windows and sashed doors, *adjoining to the open fields, and commanding a prospect of four miles distance.*" But we must quote this advertisement entire. The date of it is December 5, 1743.

To be Sold and entered upon at Lady-day next, a Large Messuage or Dwelling House, situate in Temple-Street, Birmingham, in the Possession of Mr. Charles Mageniz, containing twelve Yards in the Front, four Rooms on a Floor, sashed and fronted both to the street and Garden, good Cellaring and Vaults, Brew-house and Stable with an entire Garden walled, and the walls covered with Fruit Trees, the Garden 12 Yards wide, and 50 Yards long from the Front of the House, and extending 22 Yards wide for 26 Yards further, together with a pleasant Terrace Walk, and Summer-House with Sash'd Windows and Sash'd Doors, adjoining to the open Fields, and commanding a Prospect of four Miles Distance, and all necessary conveniencies. Likewise another House in the same Street in the tenure of Mr. George Orton, with large Shops, Gardens, and Summer-House, pleasantly situated, commanding a good Prospect; and set at nine Pounds and ten shillings per annum.

Enquire of Charles Mageniz in Temple-Street aforesaid.

On the 12th of the same month appears the following advertisement, from which it will be seen that Aston was then stated to be "nigh Birmingham"; it is always so described in old deeds:—

To be Sold to the best Bidder, on Monday, the 19th of December instant, at the Dwelling House of Francis Cox, the Angel and Hen and Chickens in Birmingham, a Messuage, now known by the Sign of the Red Lion, with about thirteen Acres of Meadow and Pasture Land, situate in Bordsley, in the Parish of Aston, nigh Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, now in the Holding of Thomas Cooper, but late in the Tenure of Mr. Thomas Warren.

Carr's Lane in the year 1745 was a very different place to that with which we are now familiar. The turning from the High Street is termed in the following report of a fatal accident "very steep." This fact shows the great changes which have been made in this part of the town. The accident occurred on Wednesday, the 1st of January in 1745—a sad opening of the new year for those related to the unfortunate, though careless driver. The paragraph recording the event is as follows:—

Birmingham, January 6.—On Wednesday last, a Man who was turning a loaded Waggon from the High Street in this Town, down Carr's Lane, a very steep Turning, without Loking the Wheels, by the sudden Motion of the Waggon he was knock'd down by the Shafts, and the Wheels going over him, he received so much Hurt that he died in an Hour afterwards.

The words "cherry orchard" have a pleasant sound. They conjure up visions of lovely country spots, redolent with blossom and fruit

delightful to look on and grateful to remember. At the time of which we write, or much later, there was a cherry orchard where now we have Little Cherry Street, perpetuating by its name the site of one of the loveliest objects in nature. In fact, all this part of the town was country in its aspect at that period. We have seen what Temple Street was with its gardens and its fields, which must have stretched to Cherry Street, uniting them with the orchard, and forming a pleasant resort for the old and staid inhabitants of the town, a welcome ramble for young lovers and a healthy play-ground for the children. The first notice of the Cherry Orchard which we find is in an advertisement which appeared on July 13, 1745 :—

To be Lett, and enter'd upon immediately. A House in the Cherry Orchard, (with or without shops) now in the Possession of Elizabeth Austin, with a Billiard Table and Brewing Vessels to be sold.

For further Particulars enquire of Mr. Thomas Walker, Baker, in Digbeth, Birmingham.

New Hall, which gave its name to New Hall Street, and New Hall Hill, was in the memory of living Birmingham men quite a country residence. In the *Gazette* of January 27, 1745, we find it first mentioned in a paragraph reporting a malicious act which was committed at the Bowling Green, near New Hall. If we wish to indulge in a game at bowls now we have to go further away to enjoy the pleasant sport. The paragraph is as follows :—"Whereas the Bowling Green of Mr. Meredith, near New Hall, by this Town, was by some malicious Persons dug up in several Places on Wednesday Night last; this is to give Notice, that whoever will discover the Persons concern'd in so doing, to Mr. Meredith, at the New Tavern in Bull Street, Birmingham, shall receive two Guineas Reward; or if either of the Persons will discover his Accomplices, so that they be brought to Justice, he shall receive the same Reward, and a free Pardon."

Most of our readers, except the youngest, remember Hockley Pool. It was at one time situated in the midst of a pleasant country district, now covered by the two cemeteries, by houses, railway lines, bridges, manufactories, and other evidences of progress. But years ago Hockley Pool was a favorite bathing place, where people could indulge in that most admirable exercise and recreation without fear of shocking public decency, so far was it considered from the town and the public

thoroughfares. The following little history of a fatal accident which occurred in 1742, will bring this matter distinctly before the reader. It appears in the *Gazette* of Monday, June 21, of that year :—

Last Thursday a Person of this Town who went into Hockley Pool to bathe, being taken with the cramp, went out of his Depth, and was drowned.

There are several paragraphs from time to time recording other fatalities at the same place, but this one will suffice for our purpose.

Snow Hill is now such a crowded part of the town that we have some difficulty in recalling its appearance when a farm was to be let in that locality. On September 27, 1742, however, we have the following advertisement :—

To be Lett, and entered upon at Michaelmas next, A Farm, containing three Closes of Land, with a Barn and Stable thereupon in good repair, near to the Salutation in, Birmingham, and now in the Holding of Mr. Samuel Stuart. Enquire of Mr. Thomas Pemberton, of Birmingham aforesaid.

Our next extract dates July 17, 1746, and takes us to New Street.

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, a convenient new built House, opposite to the Free School in New Street, Birmingham, late in the Tenure of John Williams, Bankrupt, either with or without shops, and with a Garden and other Conveniences. Note.—The Shops have been used in the Box-painting Business, and there are Grates and Stoves ready fixed, and very good lights. Enquire of Edward Dolphin, Attorney in Birmingham.

Lichfield Street is not now considered a pleasant street in which to live; but at the time of which we are writing it was far otherwise. Then the houses for the most part had gardens, and were the dwelling-places of people whose descendants have now to seek at Edgbaston, Handsworth, or Erdington for the "sweet place of flowers," as a poet calls a garden. In 1746 the following advertisement appears :—

To be Sold, the Reversion of a Freehold Messuage, with Shops, Backside, and Garden, in Lichfield Street, near the Square, Birmingham, the Tenant for Life being near ninety years old.

We have others yet to give, which show that the whole district here was a pretty neighbourhood. The square was especially so, for we have an announcement to quote next of a house being to let there having "*two large gardens*." The advertisement is also a proof that our ancestors, like their descendants, had an eye for business, for we are informed that besides having the house to let, Mrs. Baddeley sells all sorts of cast-metal weights, thus killing two birds with one stone, or

which is its equivalent, giving two bits of business information in one advertisement. The date is July 21, 1746.

To be Lett, in the Square, in Birmingham, The Corner House of Lichfield Street, late in the Possession of Mr. Richard Baddeley, which has the Convenience of a large Work Shop, two large Gardens, and a Stable for three Horses, &c. For further Particulars enquire of Mrs. Baddeley, at the said House. By whom is to be sold all sorts of Cast-Metal Weights.

Edgbaston Street has also suffered enormous changes in its appearance. Adjacent to it was Lady Well, and the Parsonage, with its gardens, and trees, which, even in living men's memory, gave such a picturesque and rural aspect to this part of the town. It would appear that at that time nearly all the houses had gardens. We are still in the year 1746.

To be Lett, and entered upon at Michaelmas next, a Good House in Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, late in the Possession of Mr. Benjamin Mansell, having four Rooms, on a Floor, with a good Stable, Garden, and other Conveniences. Enquire of Mrs. Sarah Lloyd, at the Slitting Mill, Birmingham.

We pass from Edgbaston Street to Bordesley, and our next extract brings us to the once-famous Custard House Farm. We suppose that every Birmingham man of middle age remembers the house to which this farm gave its name. The following announcement appeared in *Aris's Gazette* on October 20, 1746.

To be Lett (and entered on at Lady-day) An Estate at Bordesley, in the Parish of Aston, two Miles from Birmingham, known by the Name of the Custard House Farm, now in the Tenure of Edmond Yardley, of about the Yearly Rent of 80*l.* per Annum, the House, Barns, Stables, and other Buildings, in very good order. Enquire of Mr. George Riland, of Sutton Coldfield, Mr. William Saddler, of Castle Bromwich, or of Mr. Thomas Fisher, Attorney-at-Law, in New Street, Birmingham.

The following Advertisement, which appeared on February 2, 1747, reveals a state of things in the upper part of Deritend, which has long been changed :—

To be Sold, In the Upper Part of Deritend, near Birmingham, A Large House, with a Brew-house, Shop, and a *Pent-house for Shoeing Horses under, and a large Garden*, now inhabited by the Widow Dolphin. For further particulars enquire of John Dolphin, Blacksmith, in Deritend aforesaid.

The next quotation refers to a period when New Street abounded in gardens. Until, comparatively speaking, very recently, this street had a country air about it, which must have been very charming to look on.

A gentleman is still living (1867) who remembers the time when he gathered blackberries in this part of the town. On May 18, 1747, was advertised :—

To be Lett, a Very good House, with proper Out-building, Gardening, Yard, and other Conveniences thereunto belonging, situate in New Street, in Birmingham, and now in the occupation of Mr. John Mander, of whom enquire for Particulars.

Lancaster Street was formerly called Walmer Lane, which was corrupted into Womber Lane. The following announcement shows that the vernacular title was used in print. It also gives us a very different idea of that street to the one which it now produces. The date is July 27, 1747 :—

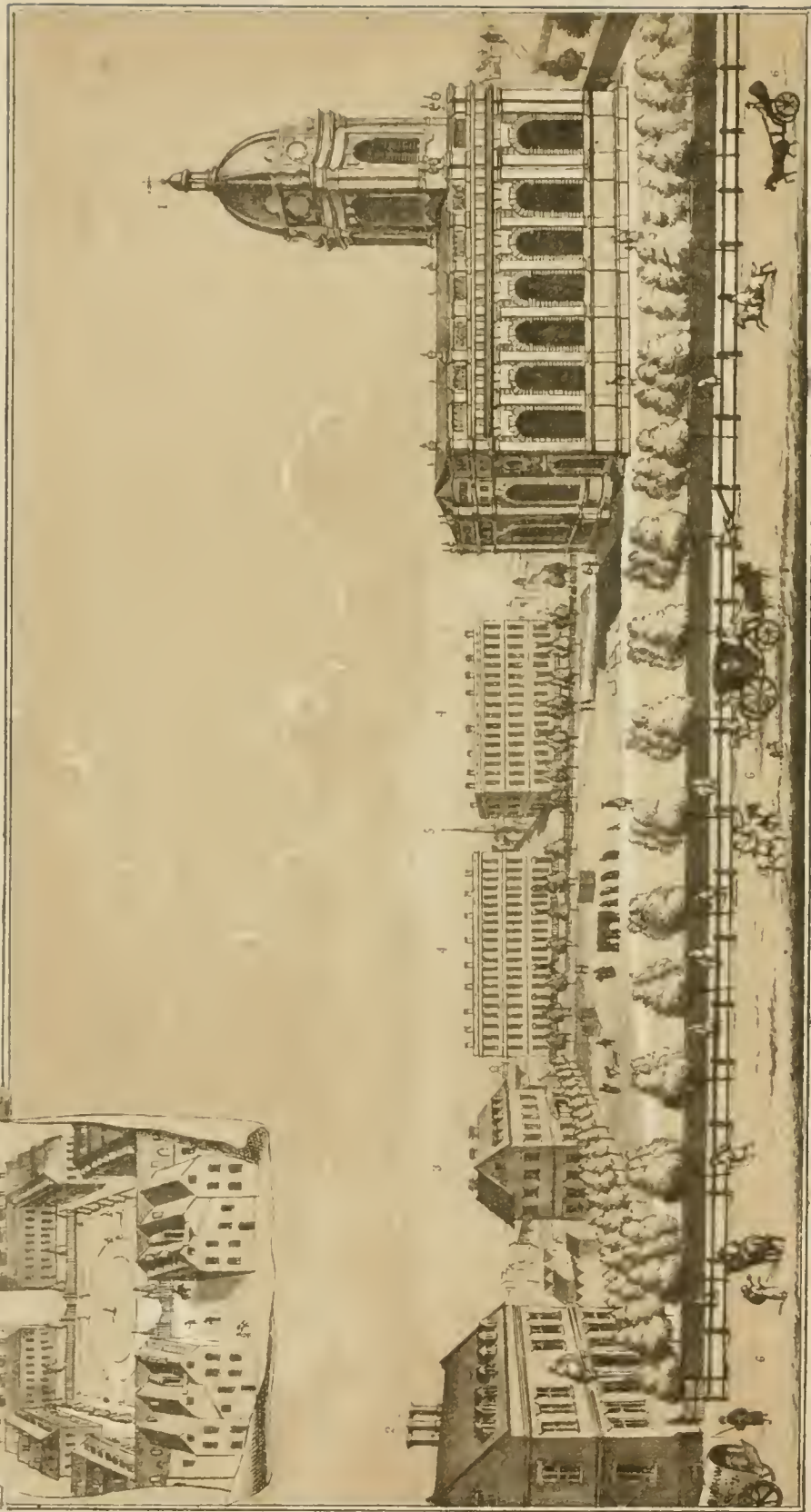
To be Sold, a Freehold Estate, now in the Tenure of Mr. Dan. Whalley and John Roper, *consisting of six Pieces of Land, a good barn, and other Conveniences on the Premises*, situate near Womber Lane, in the Parish of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick. For further Particulars, enquire of Mr. Christopher Wright, Attorney at Law, in Coventry, or of Mr. William Ward Mercer, in Birmingham aforesaid.

In the same year a farm of 85 acres was announced to be let at Aston, within a mile of Birmingham ; there was a good house, large and convenient outbuildings, and all for £60 a year rent. All these, however, are eclipsed by the following picture of retired rural felicity, which might be obtained near the bridge. On November 16, 1747, we are informed that there was,

To be Lett, And entered upon immediately, A very good new-built House, four Rooms on a Floor, with a Brew-house and Stable, and other conveniences, *a very good Garden, walled in, and a Fish Pond in it, situate very pleasant by the Water Side, near the Bridge*, in Birmingham. For Particulars enquire of Jonathan Taylor, Joyner, in Moor Street, Birmingham, or of Mrs. Sarah Hadley, in Stourbridge.

The Old Square, as we now call it, but *the* Square, as it was once termed, was the site of the Priory, the name being preserved by the streets named respectively the Upper and Lower Priory. Hutton says : "Some small remains of the old foundation are yet (1780) visible in the cellars, chiefly in the south-east. The outbuildings or pleasure grounds, perhaps,"—Hutton is very fond of a "perhaps,"—"occupied the whole north-east side of Bull Street, then uninhabited, and only the highway to Wolverhampton, bounded on the north-west by Steelhouse Lane, on the north-east by Newtown and John's Street, and on the south-east by Dale End, which also was no other than the highway to Lichfield. The whole about fourteen acres." The historian

THE NORTH PROSPECT OF ST PHILIPS CHURCH, &C. IN BIRMINGHAM.



1. The Bishop's house
2. The Temple House
3. St. Martin's Church
4. The Bull Road



1. The Bishop's house
2. The Temple House
3. St. Martin's Church
4. The Bull Road



1. The Bishop's house
2. The Temple House
3. St. Martin's Church
4. The Bull Road

calls it "this delightful eminence, which at that time commanded the small but beautiful prospect of Bristland Fields, Rowley Hills, Oldbury, Smethwick, Handsworth, Sutton Coldfield, Erdington, Saltley, the Garrison and Camp Hill, and which then stood at a distance from the town, though now near its centre." The following advertisement will give us some notion of the appearance of the Square in 1748 :—

To be Sold, two handsome Messuages, with a School Room, Warehouse, and other Back-buildings, in good Repair, with good Gardens, and a large Piece of Land lying behind the said Messuages, situated in the Square in Birmingham, in the Holding of Mr. Sawyer, and Mr. Baddeley.—Enquire of Mr. Fisher, Attorney, in Birmingham; or of Mr. Calcutt, Attorney, in Daventry.

Here is another extract showing how very dangerous a place Carr's Lane was at that time. Our readers will remember one fatal accident previously given, which occurred here from the same cause.

Birmingham, May 2nd, 1748.—On Thursday last, by the sudden Turning of a Cart from the High Street, Carr's Lane, in this town, the Driver was crushed by the Shafts against the Corner House in such a Manner, that he died in half an hour afterwards.

At the time of which we write, the New Church, St. Philip's, was situated in a most pleasant part of the town. In fact, it was literally surrounded with gardens. On one side there were no houses nearer than Bull Street, and on the other there was only the New Hall. Ann Street, then bearing the suggestive title of Mount Pleasant, was almost free from buildings; the plan of Birmingham, taken by Thomas Hanson, and published in Hutton's History in 1781, shows two avenues of trees in this part of the town. Where the houses and street known as New Market Street now are, was an open Market called New Hall Market; and all New Hall Street was country, having a fine view of fields and gardens, where houses and courts and manufactories now cover the ground. Hutton says, "When I first saw St. Philip's, in the year 1741,* at a proper distance, uncrowded with houses, for there were none to the north, New Hall excepted, untarnished with smoak, and illuminated by a western sun, I was delighted with its appearance, and thought it then, what I do now, and what others will in

* In this year *Aris's Gazette* was established

future, *the pride of the place.*" The following advertisement shows the kind of houses which existed in this neighbourhood in 1748 :—

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, A Large convenient House, *with a good Brewhouse, Stable, and Gardens*, situate near the New Church in Birmingham, late in the Possession of Mrs. Duncomb, Post Mistress.

We have frequently had to allude to the delightful state of most of the residences in Deritend. We cannot do better than quote here a passage which we believe is the earliest reference made to this part of our town. It occurs in Leland's Itinerary, and was written in the reign of Henry VIII. The writer says :—

I came through a pretty street or ever I entered, into Birmingham town. This street, as I remember, is called Dirtey (Deritend). In it dwells smiths and cutlers, and there is a brook that divides this street from Birmingham, an hamlet, or member, belonging to the parish thereby.

There is at the end of Dirtey a proper chappel and mansion-house* of tymber hard on the ripe, as the brook runneth down; and as I went through the ford, by the bridge, the water came down on the right hand, and a few miles below goeth into Tame. This brook, above Dirtey, breaketh into two arms, that a little beneath the bridge close again. This brook riseth, as some say, four or five miles above Birmingham, towards Black-hills.

The beauty of Birmingham, a good market-town in the extreme parts of Warwickshire, is one street going up alonge, almost from the left ripe of the brook, up a meane hill, by the length of a quarter of a mile. I saw but one parish-church in the town.

There be many smithes in the town that used to make knives and all manner of cutting tools, and many lorimers that make bittes, and a great many naylers; so that a great part of the town is maintained by smithes, who have their iron and sea-coal out of Staffordshire.

Our next extract, which refers to this part of the town, is dated September 12, 1748 :—

To be Lett and enter'd on when required, a Good House of the late Samuel Watton's, with two Rooms on a Floor to the Front, as also a good Cellar, and other good convenient Rooms, with a good Pump, *and a handsome garden all entire walled round*, with a very good Shop, fit for any Tradesman, lying to the Front, all in good repair, situate in Deritend, Birmingham. Enquire of Thomas Watton, near Birmingham Turnpike.

Birmingham at this time rejoiced in the possession of two crosses. The Old Cross stood nearly where Nelson's statue now stands, and the Welsh Cross was in Dale End, near to Bull Street. Hutton says, writing about 1780 or 1781, that by some antique writings it appears that "200 years ago this spot bore the name of the Welsh End, perhaps from the number of Welsh in its neighbourhood." The upper room of

* Mr. Toulmin Smith, in his "Memorials of Old Birmingham," pp. 5 and 6, proves beyond a doubt that the "mansion-house" mentioned by Leland was the "Old Crown," Deritend. The finest relic we have left of ancient Birmingham.

this cross was used as a military guardhouse, and Hutton tells us that on December 16, 1723, an order was made at a public meeting that "a guardhouse should be erected in a convenient part of the town, because neither of the crosses were eligible." Our quaint chronicler adds, "But this old order, like some of the new, was never carried into execution. As no complaint lies against the cross, in our time, we may suppose it suitable for the purpose; and *I know none but its prisoners that pronounce against it.*" The first reference to the Welsh Cross in the *Gazette* is contained in the following announcement of December 5, 1748:—

William Gibson, late servant to Mr. Roe, in Tory Row, begs leave to inform the public that he has now opened a shop for himself near the Welsh Cross, Birmingham, with a very neat assortment of Linnen Drapery, and Mercery goods, all fresh and new.

Those gentlemen and ladies who shall please to favour him with their custom may not only depend of the best usage he is capable of, but of being served at the very lowest prices,

By their very humble servant,

WILLIAM GIBSON.

This Cross was a square building, with open archways on each side, the floor space was used for a Saturday market. The upper room was used, as we have seen, for a military guard-house. The roof rather steep, and at the top was a small clock tower, surmounted by a bell-like cupola, on which was a vane. There is a picture of both crosses in "Hutton," who conjectures that the Welsh Cross was built at the beginning of 1700. The Old Cross, the same authority tells us, was erected in 1702, "at the expense of £80 9s. 1d. This was the first upon that spot ever honoured with a roof: the under part was found a useful shelter for the market people. The room over it was designed for the Court Leet and other public business, which, during the residence of the lords upon the manor, had been transacted in one of their detached apartments, yet in being; but after the removal of the lords in 1537, the business was done in the Leather Hall, which occupied the whole east end of New Street, a covered gateway of twelve feet excepted, and afterwards in the Old Cross." This was considered to be the centre of Birmingham.

Our next extract carries us back to Digbeth. It is curious to find such a place advertised for sale in the heart of the town so early even as November, 1748:—

To be Sold, Several Freehold Messuages or Dwelling Houses and Shops, with the Gardens and Appurtenances, and a Parcel of Ground, very convenient to build upon; situate in a Yard in Digbeth in Birmingham the County of Warwick, call'd Bourn's Yard, now belonging to William Colley, with a very great Conveniences of Water, and will admit of great improvements. For further particulars enquire of the said William Colley, of Mr. Richard Rann, Attorney, or of Mr. Edward Jones, Glover, in Birmingham aforesaid.

The middle of Edgbaston Street had also its gardens, and was a most delightful part of the town in which to reside. At the bottom of Smallbrook Street was St. Martin's Parsonage House, "of a circular figure," with its trees and garden, and surrounded by a "watery circle," which we suppose should be called a moat. It was of a circular figure, and the water was supplied by a neighbouring spring. The house was evidently of great antiquity, and must have been a very pleasant residence. All up Smallbrook Street, stretching away up Holloway Head, with its sunk road and windmill, and so on to Edgbaston, afforded a fine prospect of gardens and farm land, which have long since passed away. Indeed, few parts of the town have suffered greater changes than this. From advertisement of September 18, 1749, we learn that there were

To be Sold, Several Freehold Dwelling Houses, *Gardens, Shops, and other Out-buildings*, situate in Birmingham, near the middle of Edgbaston Street, all well tenanted, at the Rent of Forty-one Pounds a Year, with Room for Improvements and good Springs of Hard and Soft Water belonging thereto. Enquire of George Irving; of Mr. Thomas Russel, in Digbeth; or of Mr. William Hawkes, in Deritend.

Moor Street had also a very different appearance to the one which it now presents. The New Theatre was in this street; and that welcome ornament to a house, a garden, was of ordinary occurrence. This announcement shows the condition of the place in 1749:—

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, at the Upper End of Moor Street, Birmingham, a good and convenient new-built House, with four Rooms on a Floor, Cellar'd under, with a good Pump, backside, and *Garden wall'd round, and other Conveniences, all entire*. For particulars, enquire of Jonathan Freeth, in Dale End; John Freeth, in Moor Street, Birmingham; or of John Bradley, of Stourbridge, who may be met with most Thursdays at John Pry's, at the Hen and Chickens, in Birmingham.

The following announcement of a farm to let was inserted in March, 1748:—

To be Lett And entered upon immediately, A Farm in the Parish of Edgbaston, near Birmingham, late in the Possession of William Price, deceas'd. For further Particulars enquire of the Widow upon the Premises.



In the next, dated December 12, 1748, there is a reference to the Parsonage House, then in Smallbrook Street:—

To be sold (Together or Separate) A Range of Building, containing six Houses, situated at the Lower End of Dudley-street, opposite the Parsonage House in Birmingham; being the Estate of Robert Mansell, lately decess'd. For further Particulars enquire of Mr. John Holloway, at New Hall, in Birmingham.

In 1749 such a house as that mentioned below was to be found in the High Street:—

To be Lett, over against the Castle, in the High Street, Birmingham, The greatest Part of a House, *with Brew-house, Gardens, Stables, and all other Conveniences for a Family.* Enquire of Mr. Richards, Gunsmith, in Birmingham.

Our next takes us to Lichfield Street, and presents a nice picture of a roadside inn. The date is March, 1750.

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, The Queen's Head Inn, at the End of Lichfield Street, Birmingham, being where six ways meet, with good stabling, *a good pit to water Horses*, with all other necessary Conveniences, *and a Spot of Ground near adjoining for a Bowling-Green, if desired.*

The march of progress and the increase of population was beginning to spoil some of the finest prospects. Buildings were being erected near the New Church, as the following advertisement of September 23, 1751, fully testifies. The particularity with which the address is given is remarkable:—

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, in Colmore Row, by the Side of the New Church Yard, Birmingham, next door to Mrs. Fullwood's Assembly House, a very convenient New-built Dwelling-house, either with or without Shops and a Stable.

The next and last of this series tells us what a very old sign the Golden Cup in Smallbrook Street is, and how more than a hundred years since there was a well-known "Mug House" in that street.

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, or at Christmas next, the Old Golden Cup, situated in Smallbrook Street, Birmingham; being an old-accustomed Mug House.

We have now concluded our quotations of passages illustrative of the appearance of the old town between 1741 and 1751. Let us now endeavour to form something like a complete idea of the place in that period. If we begin with Deritend, we find that that now not very prepossessing locality was a pleasant and attractive spot. Here were beautiful and picturesque houses, some of which (with the finest of them all—the "Old Crown") remain to this day to testify how keen

a sense of beauty inspired our ancestors in their domestic buildings, as well as in their churches and cathedrals. Almost all these houses had gardens, some of them fishponds, and some private walks down to the river-side, which was then a clear and musical stream. A traveller coming into Birmingham from the Coventry Road could still have called it with Leland, "a pretty street or ever he entered." At the upper end was a deer park; and Mr. Toulmin Smith* traces the etymology of Deritend to this circumstance. In his interesting book, "Men and Names of Old Birmingham," he says, "As for 'Deritend'—'Der-yat-end'—it remains the end nigh the Deergate." And in a note to this passage, he adds, "Mr. William Hodgetts informs me that he himself remembers the existence of a deer-park here, and has seen deer feeding in it, and that a large part of the wall of this park stood, at the time he speaks of, on the north side of Bradford Street. He specifically informs me that a 'portion of the wall now forms a portion of the yard attached to the police station in Alcester Street and Bradford Street; and within my recollection there were considerable extents of boundaries both in Bradford and Warwick Streets; and from the back yards of the houses, which no doubt had been built on portions of the park, the deer were frequently fed from the hands of the tenants.'"

The present writer remembers a part of this park crossing the top end of Bradford Street, and stretching on to the Ravenhurst, the street now bearing that name not then being in existence. There are, fortunately, two plans of the town, Westley's, 1731, and Bradford's, 1751, which give us a most vivid picture of the appearance of Birmingham at their respective dates. It is a pleasant employment to compare these two early plans and note the changes made in fifty years. They are few indeed compared with those of our own time; but they show that the town was growing, and stretching itself in every direction. In Westley's plan Bull Street is still called Chappell Street; and we have such names as Corn Cheaping in front of St. Martin's Church. The present High Street and Dale End are represented by High Town, Beast Market, Welch End Cross, Broad Street, and Dale End. Cock or Well Street is at the Park Street end of Digbeth; Moor Street

* Memorials of Old Birmingham Men and Names. By Toulmin Smith. Page 71.

is also called Mole Street, Coleshill Street is Cole's Hill Street, we have White Hall, or Steelhouse Lane; and where are now Monmouth Street, Colmore Row, and Ann Street, there is only New Hall Lane. Carr's Lane is Care's Lane. The Baptists' Meeting House is in Freeman Street. There are only two Churches: St. Martin's and St. Philip's in Birmingham, and St. John's Deritend. At the foot of this plan we read:—"In the year 1700 Birmingham contained 30 streets, 100 courts and alleys, 2504 houses, 15,032 inhabitants, one Church dedicated to St. Martin and a Chappell to St. John and a School founded by Edward 6th. also two Dissenting Meeting Houses. the increase of this Town from 1700 to y^e year 1731 is as follows, 25 streets, 50 courts and alleys, 1252 houses, 8254 Inhabitants. together with a new church, Charity School, Market Cross, and 2 Meeting Houses." It is like looking at a pretty village in the midst of, and surrounded by, country to look over these plans and view. Fields and gardens and trees appear in all directions—in what may be called the heart of the town, as well as in the outskirts.

Bradford's view of Birmingham was published in 1752, and is thus characterised by Mr. Toulmin Smith:—"It is a remarkable and very fine engraving, more than five feet in length, and so extremely rare that no copy besides my own is known to exist by those best acquainted with illustrations of Birmingham." It will be interesting to our readers to have before them the description of the "place and people" which is given in this rare picture. It is quoted in Mr. Toulmin Smith's "Traditions of the Old Crown House"*—a book we gladly recommend to every one interested in the annals of the old town. We are indebted to this work for the following most interesting bit of information. Writing on Bradford's famous view of Birmingham, Mr. Smith says:—"Under the fine engraved view of Birmingham above named there is put a description of the place and people so quaint that the engraving being thus scarce a copy of this description will be acceptable to those who care for memorials of Old Birmingham. It is as follows:—

Birmingham. A considerable Market Town in the County of Warwick. It is Pleasantly Situated on a gravelly Soil. Descending on the South East to the River Rea, it is now become very Large and Populous, which is greatly owing to the Freedom it yet

* pp. 6-7 foot-note.

Enjoys, as well as the Industry of the People, and their Extensive Trade. The Inhabitants are generally of an obliging and Ingenious Disposition, and have the character of being sincere in their Dealings. The Houses are chiefly built of Brick, and the publick Buildings (though but few) are Neat and Magnificent. St. Phillip's Church, which is esteemed one of the Principle Ornaments of this Town, is built of white free-stone, and has an agreeable situation. The Spire of St. Martin's is justly admired, and, notwithstanding it has been built several hundred years, is thought superior in Beauty to most in this Nation. St. Bartholomew's Chapel is lately built, and has a double row of Windows on each side; ye outside is plain, but ye Inside is allow'd to be very handsome and neatly finish'd. St. John's Chapel (Deritend) was rebuilt about 17 years ago. The Tower is not yet finish'd, but the Body of the Chapel makes a good appearance. There are, besides, Meeting Houses for Dissenters of most Denominations. The Free-school and Workhouse are handsome, regular pieces of Building, and may be deservedly esteemed useful as well as ornamental."

Bradford's plan is frequently referred to in the advertising columns of the *Gazette*. It appears that considerable delay occurred in its publication, for on August 6, 1750, we find the following announcement:—

To the Subscribers for the Plans of Birmingham, &c.

The Proprietor having been greatly retarded by the Illness of two of his principal Assistants in Engraving the Plan of Birmingham and Map of the County, and by that means is rendered incapable of publishing according to his Promise; he assures them that the Work is now continued, in great Forwardness and will be ready to deliver to the Subscribers some Time in October; and that Subscriptions are taken in as usual, by Mr. Bradford, Mr. Jefferys, in Digbeth; Mr. Jackson, Printseller in Birmingham; and by the Booksellers of Birmingham, Coventry, and Towns adjacent.

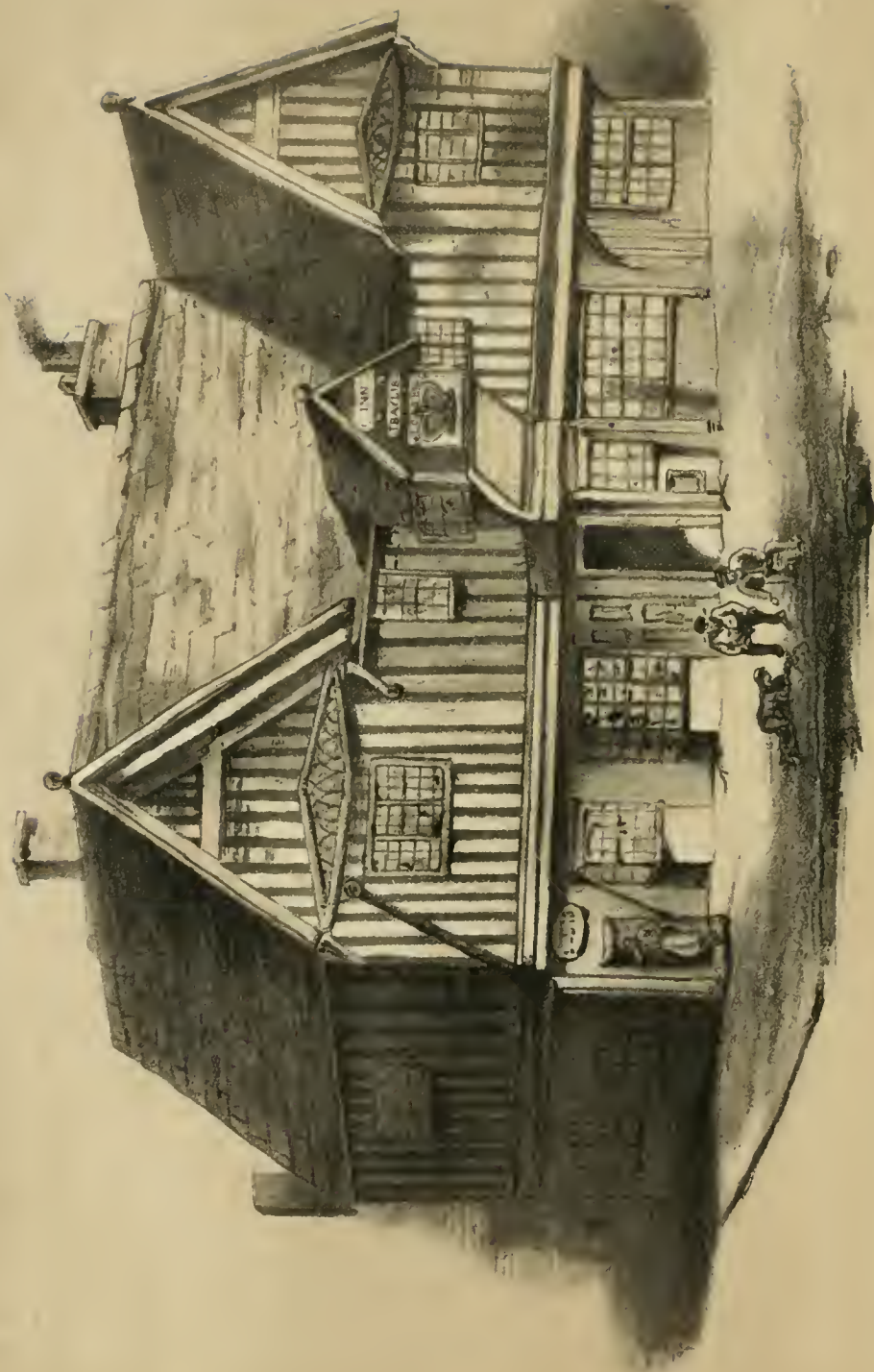
This promise was not kept. The plan was not ready in October; in fact it was delayed until the April of the following year, as is shown by this advertisement:—

This is to inform the Subscribers to the Map of Warwickshire, and Plans of Birmingham and Coventry.

That the Plan of Birmingham (if desired) is to be delivered to the Subscribers next Week, and the Map of the County as soon as it can be finished, which will be in about a Month. Those who have Birmingham only, are to pay 3s.*

But to return to Deritend. Mr. Smith tells us that "There was formerly a private footpath leading from the middle of the garden of the Old Crown House, before Heath Mill Lane had become a thoroughfare, down to the river Rea. This footpath is particularly named in old deeds; the place of it is plainly marked on Bradford's

* Mr. Smith thinks it probable that Bradford's *view* was never published, that his single copy is a proof, and that the delays in the publication of the *plan* proved fatal to the *view*. This is borne out by the fact that collectors have offered large prices for a copy in vain.



OLD CROWN, DERTEND.

From a sketch taken in 1840

very excellent plan of Birmingham, drawn on a survey made in 1750; and there are still living, in Deritend, elderly people who remember it in use, along its old way, from Heath Mill Lane to the river, though no longer being only a private footpath from the garden of the Old Crown House." Besides this there was another footpath leading down to the river; and the same writer truly tells us "that the banks of the stream were a pleasant stroll before the water became befouled. But it is certainly remarkable that a private walk of this kind should have remained unchanged so long. It is especially named in a deed of 1524; it is in Bradford's plan (published in 1751); and I have before me while I write three rough sketches of the ground, all made in and between the years 1800 and 1808, in each of which this 'Walk to the Water' is marked down in the same place."

Where Smithfield Market now stands was then the Moat which, in still earlier times, surrounded the castle of the family of the Birminghams. Hutton thus speaks of what he rather irreverently calls the "ditch" which surrounded it: "Being filled with water, it has the same appearance now as perhaps a thousand years ago, but not altogether the same use. It then served to protect its master, but now to turn a thread mill." Here was also the famous Pudding Brook, which in the writer's youth was supposed to have been immortalised in a now almost forgotten street ballad. There was something remarkable about this stream, or rather streamlet (in its later days it would have been more correct to name it mudlet), which our garrulous historian has not failed to note. He thus describes this brook: "Near the place where this small rivulet discharges itself into the moat another of the same size is carried over it, called Pudding Brook, and proceeds from the town as this advances towards it, producing a curiosity seldom met with. One river runneth south and the other north, for half a mile, yet only a path of three feet asunder, which surprised Brindley, the famous engineer." The Old Church was then surrounded by shops and houses, which were not taken down until as late as 1806. Where Nelson's Monument now stands was the Old Cross, with its Court Leet, and other public offices. New Street contained very few houses, and to these gardens were attached. The New Church (St. Philip's) had scarcely a house to hide it from the eye of the visitor, there not being any nearer than Bull Street on one

side, and only the New Hall on another; while in Temple Street we have seen that the houses had gardens which led into fields, and so on to Mount Pleasant (now Ann Street), and away to what is now called Broad Street, but which was then a country road, leading to gardens and fields. Broad Street is not named in "Hanson's Plan," published as late as 1781.

The Dale End part of the town was also in striking contrast with its present appearance. Here was the Welsh Cross, with its military guard-house. Moor Street, anciently called Molle Street, and then Mole Street, was also crowded with gardens. Carr's Lane was a "very steep incline," which was often the cause of fatal accidents. But perhaps the following passage from Hutton on the markets of the town gives us as vivid an impression of the curious condition of a place in which such scattered localities could be selected for the sale of the various requirements of life as anything that could be quoted:—"For want of a convenient place where the sellers may be collected into one point, they are scattered into various parts of the town. Corn is sold by sample, in the Bull Ring; the eatable productions of the garden in the same place; butchers' stalls occupy Spiceal Street; one would think a narrow street was preferred, that no customer should be suffered to pass by. Flowers, shrubs, &c., at the end of Philip Street and Moor Street; beds of earthenware lie in the middle of the foot ways; and a double range of insignificant stalls, in the front of the shambles, choak up the passage: the beast market is kept in Dale End: that for pigs, sheep and horses in New Street: cheese issues from one of our principal inns: fruit, fowls, and butter are sold at the Old Cross: nay, it is difficult to mention a place where they are not. We may observe that if a man hath an article to sell which another wants to buy, they quickly find each other out."

One of the most remarkable features of old Birmingham was the situation of the parish church. Until the beginning of the present century St. Martin's was surrounded by houses and shops.* These, as is clearly shown both in Westley's and Bradford's plan, extended from the top part of Digbeth, then called Cock or Well Street, up Corn

* My mother-in-law lived in one of these houses, and when we arrive at the period of their removal her recollections will enable me to give some interesting particulars of the houses and their inhabitants.

Cheaping, the name of the spot at the top of Well Street, in which the corn market was held; in front of the church, and then down Mercer or Spicer, now Spiceal Street. Mr. Toulmin Smith has kindly furnished me with an extract from an old deed, of the end of the sixteenth century, touching premises near the Old Church. The original is, of course, in Latin, but the names of places are in English:—All that messuage or tenement, with the Well [fontem], and a certain parcel of land with certain buildings, called '*Wellyarde*,' with all and singular their appurtenances, situate, lying, and being in Birmingham aforesaid, in a certain street there called '*Corne-Cheping*,' alias '*Corne-Market*,' between the tenement of the Governors of the Free Grammar School there, a tenement of Thomas Affeelde of Kingsnorton, a street there called '*Mercer's Streete*,' and a certain passage or way leading from '*Corne-Chepinge*' towards the '*Easteyarde*.'" How vividly such a record of one of the business transactions of our forefathers calls to mind the enormous changes which a century has made in the appearance of the town!

Our readers have now before them a complete record of the materials which will enable them to form a clear picture of the appearance of Birmingham in 1751.

§ 2. PUBLIC LIFE AND EVENTS.

Judging from the very brief references made to public affairs in the local news of our old papers, we are compelled to believe that there were scarcely any events of a public nature worth recording. The people seemed to have amused themselves in their own way—and a very questionable way it was for the most part—and to have let everything else go by default. They appear to have been a very contented and also a very loyal people. All, or almost all, their public demonstrations are made on the celebration of some Royal birthday, or the arrival of the King from Hanover; of some event connected with the Royal Family, or to commemorate a victory. The allusions to anything like local public life as we understand it now are of the rarest occurrence. No police reports, no public meetings, no charitable appeals, no literature, no popular educational institutions, no popular lectures,

no libraries, no news rooms, no penny readings, no Board of Guardians, no Town Council, no debates of local senates, no orations of local senators to read, no leading articles, for there were no local events about which to write. All seems to have been a dull, dead level of monotonous existence varied by occasional cock-fights and other brutal sports. In our present high-pressure course of life it is a very difficult thing to realise the sober, jog-trot, unpretending life of our great grandfathers. We must not, however, forget that it was the steady, persistent, indomitable, and undiverted industry of those great-grandfathers that made the modern Birmingham possible. They sowed, and we are reaping: it is perhaps a question that would admit of close argument as to which were the happier of the two generations.

Reporting in the present sense was unknown. Sometimes weeks pass in succession without a line of local news. Then we are often deluded by the side-head Birmingham, and on reading the few lines which follow we learn that at Shrewsbury, or at Leicester, or at Melton Mowbray, or at some other place more or less distant from this town, some trivial event occurred which would not be thought worthy of recording, or one of such a nature that no editor would now think of using. The principal events narrated, and those in the briefest manner possible, are the celebrations of royal birth-days, and the constantly recurring cock-fights which disgraced our local history until a very recent date. In all that affects the life of the people the advertisements are again our fullest and our most faithful sources of information. From these, supplemented by the news columns, we shall be enabled to gather a considerable harvest of curious and interesting extracts, which will surprise the dwellers in modern Birmingham.

The first notice we have of any public act is in the first number of the *Gazette*, November 16, 1741, and is a birthday celebration—although not a royal one; it was in honour of a King among men:—

Birmingham, Nov. 14.—The Birth-Day of Admiral Vernon was celebrated here with all the Tokens of Regard due to that worthy Man. The morning was ushered in with the Clamming of the Bells, and the day concluded with Bonfires and of drinking Success to his Majesty's Arms.

This brief paragraph is all the local news published in the first number.

Among the very earliest items of local news which we meet is one which will be very interesting to our Wesleyan readers—and to all in fact who find pleasure and profit in contrasting the present with the past, and in tracing the growth and development of public feeling on religious questions. The tone of the notice, and the nature of the queries, are curious illustrations of the feeling of the country a century and a half back. The event thus commemorated occurred on Thursday, May 6, 1742; and is thus alluded to in the *Gazette* of the Monday following:—

Birmingham, May 10.—On Thursday last one of the Methodists (as they are term'd) appear'd in this place; he preached to a numerous audience from a common near the town. What success he met with he himself can only say. The following questions are proper to be answer'd:—1. If a Church is only two or three faithful people or more assembled in any place, what Occasion is there for material Buildings?—2. If not, what occasion for a new Church near Cambridge, where fields and highways are allowed?—3. If there is such Occasion, whether the new Church near Cambridge, or Mr. Whitfield's Orphan House, will be first erected?—4. If the doctrine of absolute Election be true, what Account can be given of the Moral Attributes of God?—5. Whether the Preacher has not a little mistaken his real Interest, since if some are to be saved whatever they do, and others are to be damn'd if they seek after Salvation, what avails it either to attend or neglect his Preaching?—6. Granting the doctrine of absolute Election to be true in the sense contended for by our Preacher, whether he is one of the Elect by any other Evidence than his own simple Persuasion, or whether his proceeding is not directly opposite to what he promised at his Ordination? All these are queries that deserve to be answer'd.

The preacher referred to evidently did not take the bait. He was not to be dragged into a controversy, and so avoided the six points of this interrogatory charter. So the author of the queries, which were inserted editorially, comes out in the next number with a letter, and, in the high sounding name of Britannicus, thus addresses the editor—or rather the printer—as was then the practice.

May 17, 1742.

To the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.

The Queries published in your last Paper, by common Report, I find will receive no direct Answer. The Preacher to whom they are particularly addressed, has declined the Task in an ungenerous manner. If he has that disinterested Concern for the welfare of Mankind, which he expresses (but few believe) here is a Field in which he may display his Abilities. To challenge a person in a loose, declamatory way, may sound well to an ignorant Populace, but all discerning Persons will easily see that this is only a Cover for a Retreat, that the Methodist is hard to put to it; and that something must be said, or the Diana left in Danger. The Author of the Queries, if there will be Room for it, proposes in your next Paper to make some Remarks upon a late Libel of justification. The

Doctrine is there stated, and the Method of publishing it sure deserves some notice. Truth and sincerity will, I hope, ever recommend themselves to the reasonable Part of Mankind.

Yours, BRITANICUS.

The subject does not seem to have been a very attractive one, and so the matter dropped.

It must be borne in mind that the period of which we write was one of war and commotion. The Hanoverian dynasty was far from being securely seated on the English throne. There was the descendant of King James the Second waiting his opportunity—which, unfortunately for him, soon occurred—to pounce upon the country, involve it in rebellion, in the hope of seizing the crown which the folly and the crimes of his grandfather had lost. Birmingham had an hereditary hatred against the Stuarts. She never forgot the “burning love” of Prince Rupert, who, in 1643, poured his soldiers into the town, set it on fire, and levied a contribution on its inhabitants in aid of the royal cause. So the revolution of 1688 was popular in this town, and the Georges, who succeeded in consequence of that memorable event, were popular too. Any one to keep out the hated Stuarts. In 1742 George the Second was king. He had succeeded to the throne on June 11, 1727; and in the first June after the establishment of the *Gazette* we have the following announcement of the celebration of the anniversary of his accession. It must always be remembered, in reference to dates, that the paper was published on Mondays, and the date of publication is given in the extracts:—

Birmingham, June 14.—Last Friday being the Anniversary of his Majesty's Accession to the Throne, in which he enter'd into the sixteenth Year of his Reign, the same was observ'd with Ringing of Bells, and other Demonstrations of Joy. The Evening was concluded with Bonfires, and drinking to the Healths of his Majesty and Royal Family, Success to his Majesty's Arms, and to the Healths of those Gentlemen who have appeared conspicuous in the Interest of their Country.

Here is the record of a local event, which will be interesting to many readers:—

Birmingham, July 26.—A few days since Sir Lister Holt, Bart., of Aston Hall, in the County of Warwick, and Member of Parliament for Litchfield, was married to Miss Harpur, Sister of Sir Henry Harpur, of Twyford, Derbyshire, Bart., a lady of great Fortune, and possess'd of all the valuable Accomplishments that adorn her Sex.

In 1743 the King took command of the allied armies, and on the 16th of June defeated the French under the Duke de Noailles, at

Dettingen. Wonderful to relate the *Gazette* gives a full plan of the battle, showing the position of the various forces on that notable day. The news was received in Birmingham with great enthusiasm. The following is the brief notice of the event:—

Birmingham, June 27.—On the receiving here the agreeable News of the Defeat of the French by the Force under the Command of his Majesty, the Bells of both our Churches were set to Ringing, at Noon there were several Discharges of Fire from the Soldiers, and the Evening was concluded with Bonfires, Illumination of Windows, and drinking Success to his Majesty's Arms.

The expected rebellion broke out in 1745. In July, Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, sailed from Port St. Nazaire, and landed with a few partisans in the Hebrides. He was proclaimed King at Perth on September 4; and at Edinburgh on the 16th. On the 21st the Highlanders defeated Sir John Cope at Preston Pans, or Glaidsmuir. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended on October 21; and England proved her earnestness in raising 60,000 volunteers to assist in suppressing the rebellion. The Duke of Cumberland came from the Netherlands and brought part of his army with him. On November 6, Prince Charles entered England and took Carlisle on the 15th; on the 24th he had reached Lancaster, and Manchester on the 28th. The Duke of Cumberland with his forces was at Lichfield, on his way to meet the rebel army, which began to retreat on December 6, and arrived at Glasgow on the 25th. The news of the retreat of the rebels reached this town on Saturday, February 8, 1746; and we read that "on receiving the agreeable News of the Flight of the Rebels before his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, the Bells of this Town were set to Ringing, and the Evening was spent with the highest Demonstrations of Joy, as Bonfires, Illumination of Windows, giving Ale to the Populace, &c." The famous and decisive battle of Culloden was fought on April 16, 1746; and the hopes of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" crushed for ever. The way in which Birmingham received the intelligence of this welcome victory is told in a few lines; but the joy of the people was evidently sincere, and the enthusiasm unbounded. This is the notice of the celebration:—

Birmingham, April 28.—On Saturday, on receiving the agreeable news of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland's having obtained a compleat Victory over the Rebels, in every Face here appear'd the greatest joy and loyalty, which were demonstrated by the

Ringling of Bells, several Firing from the Companies of the Right Hon. the Lord Gower's Regiment, and in the Evening by Bonfires, Fireworks, giving great quantities of Ale to the Populace, and an Illumination of Windows throughout the whole town.

A day of general thanksgiving was appointed for October 9, which Birmingham kept with the same display of loyalty which had marked her celebration of the victory.

Birmingham, Oct. 13.—Thursday last being the Day appointed for a general Thanksgiving for the suppression of the late unnatural Rebellion by the Defeat of the Rebels by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, at the battle of Culloden, the same was observed here with the greatest Loyalty; the Morning was usher'd in by the Ringing of Bells, which was continued till the Time of Divine Service; in the Evening the Illumination of Windows far exceeded what was ever known here before, the Windows of those Houses in the most remote Parts of the Town being filled with Candle; and the Night was concluded with Bonfires, (at several of which great Quantities of Ale were given to the Populace), Fireworks, and all other Demonstrations of Joy.

The following lines express the sentiments of almost the whole nation on the suppression of this rebellion. They are entitled

RESTORATION COMPLETED.

For Monarchy restor'd, while Thanks we pay,
And warmly loyal, celebrate this day,
O with our Praises let our Pray'rs unmix,
That virtuous Deeds our Happiness may fix!
That annual Choise may keep our S—te pure,
That Courage, Truth, and Candour, may endure
Till antient Faith our Character restore,
And Free-born Britons venal are no more.

The anniversary of the King's accession was regularly celebrated here, but we need not repeat the same paragraph, which yearly records the event. They are almost literally the same. Ringing of the bells, firing by the soldiers, bonfires and illuminations, and drinking ale, with other signs of hilarious joy. Of many of the revellers on these occasions we might quote very appropriately Burns's lines describing Tam O'Shanter's state:—

Kings might be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er all the ills of life victorious.

The King's favours were conferred on two local men during this year, which are worth recording in this place. On July 7, 1746, we read:—

The King has been pleased to grant unto the Right Hon. Francis Baron Brooke, the dignity of an Earl of the Kingdom of Great Britain, by the Name, Stile, and Title of Earl Brooke, of Warwick Castle, in the County of Warwick.

And again, on the same day,

The King has been pleased to grant unto the Right Hon. John Baron-Gower, the Dignities of a Viscount and Earl of the Kingdom of Great Britain, by the Name, Stile, and Title of Viscount Trentham, in the County of Stafford, and Earl Gower.

On February 2, 1747, we have a notice of considerable local importance. In the paper of that date we read as follows:—

Notice is hereby given, That To-morrow Evening at Six o'Clock a Subscription will be open at Mrs. Beet's for Building a Chapel in the Parish of St. Philip's at which Time and Place the Inhabitants of this Town are desired to meet.

On February 23, 1747, the following appeal is made to the inhabitants in behalf of this laudable undertaking:—

To the Inhabitants of Birmingham and Places adjacent.—A Subscription will shortly be opened for erecting and endowing a Chapel in the Parish of St. Philip, and upon the Subscription of One Thousand Pounds not less than eleven, nor more than twenty-one Trustees will be elected as Managers: Who after a proper Place is fix'd upon (to erect the said Chapel) will be empower'd to collect (at four equal quarterly Payments) the Sums of Money subscrib'd by each Person. Which Trustees are likewise to nominate a Chaplin; who will not only be oblig'd to Residence, but to preach twice every Sunday; and as a handsome Provision will be made, he will not be allowed to be Curate, Lecturer, or Chaplain of any other Place whatsoever.

In February, 1749, peace was proclaimed. The event took place in this town on Thursday, the 16th, "on which occasion," we are told, "was assembled the largest concourse of People ever seen in this Town." The day of thanksgiving was fixed for May 25. and was thus observed in Birmingham:—

Birmingham, May 1.—Tuesday, the Day of Thanksgiving on Account of the Peace, was observ'd here with Ringing of Bells and other Demonstrations of Joy. In the Evening were Bonfires, Illumination of Windows throughout the whole Town, and at two different Places the grandest Fireworks ever seen here, consisting of a great number of Line and common Rockets, Wheels, Stars, Suns, &c., and at the Conclusion of those at one of the Places, was an Explosion of near 200 Rockets at the same Time. There was an elegant Entertainment provided, at which were present a great Number of Gentlemen. During the whole Time of the Fireworks, we don't hear of any Misfortune that happen'd.

The first notice we have of any trade movement in the town occurs on May 19, 1746. It proceeds from the filers of gun barrels, and the emphasis and clearness of the concluding portion is quite refreshing:—
"The Filers of Gun-Barrels are desired to meet and consult about keeping up the Price and Goodness of their Work, and so let their Masters and the Buyers of Gun Barrels know, that if their Prices are

lower'd, the Barrels will be much worse." Our next extract relates to a trade which was then of importance in the town, but has since given place to other industries. Weaving is not now a great branch of trade here, but it is evident from the following report it occupied a rather prominent position at that time. The notice appeared July 11, 1748.

This is to give Notice to all Housekeepers and others, That on the 1st of this Instant July, there was at Camp Hill, near Birmingham, at Richard Baylis's, at the Sign of the Anchor, a meeting of Master Weavers from Birmingham, Norton, Yardley, Handsworth, and several Parts 4 or 5 Miles about Birmingham, to consult about some bad Customs that have been very prejudicial to every Man there present, belonging to the Weaving Trade, who subscribed their Names to the Proposals that follow. That they will weave no Hempen Cloth for less than 3*d.* per Ell, nor Shackadown for less than 2*d.* halfpenny per Ell, nor Hurden Cloth for less than 2*d.* per Ell; and that they will be paid for every Ell of Linnen Cloth they weave, let it be coarse or fine, and not weave two Ells in twenty for nothing; Nor will they weave Woollen Cloth, Yard and Half wide, be it ever so coarse, for less than 4*d.* per Yard, nor fine for less than 6*d.* per Yard, nor Sale Lincey for less than 2*d.* per Yard; nor Bedticks made with all Flaxen Yarn for less than 3*d.* per yard; nor Shackadown Ticks for less than 6*d.* per yard. They will meet at the same place the 18th Day of this Month, and desire all those Weavers that were not there before to be present. If any further satisfaction is wanting, enquire of Thomas Wiggin, in Birmingham, or of John Simcox, of Camp Hill.

The first official notice from the local authorities which we have met with appears on the 13th of March, 1749, and has reference to the Corn Market. The High Bailiff and Steward issued the following document:—

Birmingham, March 13, 1748-9.

Whereas the Place used in this Town as a Corn Market, has of late been taken up by Persons vending of Earthen Wares, Garden Stuff, &c., this is therefore to acquaint all such Persons, that for the future the same will be cleared, and render'd convenient for the Meeting of Buyers and of Sellers of Grain only, as usual. And all Persons who attempt to set any Stalls, Stands, &c., for Sale of such Goods will be prosecuted for the same.

T. WICKINS, High Bailiff.

I. MADDOX, Steward.

The mechanics of Birmingham were always renowned for their ingenuity and skill. They were capable of turning their hands to many things; and Hutton, in his own curious and grandiloquent manner, compares the inventor of the "gilt button" to Shakspeare and Newton; and to the mind of our dear old gossiping historian, John Taylor, "who possessed the singular powers of perceiving things as they really are," appears as an "uncommon genius." To him "we owe

the gilt-button, the japanned and gilt snuff-boxes, with the numerous race of enamels. From the same fountain also issued the paper snuff-box, at which one servant earned three pounds ten shillings per week, by painting them at a farthing each." It is quite evident, however, that for manipulative cleverness the working men of this town were not excelled by any. They proved it by the production of an infinite number of articles, which made the town the "toy-shop" of England and of the world. It would fill a long paper, and would be as uninteresting as Homer's catalogue of the ships in the *Iliad*, simply to enumerate the articles which they produced. Then, as now, the fame of the town for varied manufactures was great. Unhappily, this skill was frequently put to very questionable uses, and the Birmingham coiners brought immense discredit on the town. "Brummagem" was the common appellation for bad money; and counterfeit halfpence was a well known and almost generally recognised branch of local industry. The references to this subject in the old *Gazette* are frequent. They follow each other in rapid succession, and persons guilty of making counterfeit coin were arrested and sent to prison with laudable diligence. One or two of these notices will suffice. On November 15, 1742, we are told that, "On Tuesday last a Person of this Town was taken up for being concerned in making Counterfeit Halfpence, who has discover'd some others guilty of the like practice; two of whom are taken into custody; but the rest have absconded." On December 6, in the same year, we read that "On Tuesday last six Men were convey'd from hence to Warwick Gaol, under a strong Guard of Soldiers, for making and uttering of Counterfeit Halfpence." In the following week, December 13, we have recorded that "Since our last four more Persons have been taken up for making and uttering Counterfeit Halfpence, two of whom are admitted to Bail." These cases might be multiplied indefinitely. The crime was severely punished, but for a long time the frequency of its commission was not affected by this treatment. The punishments were so disproportioned to the crime that they appear to have had little effect as deterrents. The coining of counterfeit halfpence was not considered by the tradesmen of the town as a subject of much importance, and until the year 1751 they were in pretty

general circulation. In the early part of that year measures were taken to stop them; and in consequence of a recommendation of the Judge and Grand Jury at Warwick Assizes the following notice appeared:—

Birmingham, April 8, 1751.

It Having been recommended by the Judge and Grand Jury at the Assizes at Warwick, that an absolute Refusal should be continued of taking Counterfeit Halfpence, the Tradesmen and Shopkeepers of this Town are determined for the future to take none; and it is to be hoped that those of other places will do the same, by which Means it is likely a Stop may be put to the making of them.

The Reward for discovering a Maker of Counterfeit Halfpence is £10., to be paid upon Conviction.

This recommendation was acted on, and the following advertisement tells us the means which were employed to call in these counterfeits in order to have them melted down:—

This is to give Notice, That for the future the Tradesmen of this Town will take no Counterfeit Halfpence, but after the rate of Eightpence per Pound, in order to their being melted.

The first allusion to King Edward's School which we find is contained in the notice of the election of a writing master, which took place on Wednesday, February 3, 1742:—

Birmingham, Feb. 8.—Last Wednesday came on the Election of a Writing Master for the Free-School here, founded by King Edward 6th, in the room of the late Mr. James deceased, when Mr. Becket, who keeps a school at Coventry, and who served his time with Mr. James, was chose to succeed him.

In 1746 there was an election of a Head Master to the school. The following is the notice:—

Birmingham, Nov. 10.—On Friday last came on the Election of a Head Master of the Free-School in this town (founded by King Edward 6th) in the Room of the Reverend Mr. Mainwaring deceased, when the Reverend Mr. Wilkinson was chosen.

In the same year, namely, 1742, and on the 12th day of that month, the following event occurred:—"The wife of Mr. Crosby, in Litchfield Street, was delivered of three fine boys, who are all likely to live, which were baptized by the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Charity was a characteristic of the people then as it happily is now. This case attracted public attention, and in the next paper the following appeal was made in behalf of the family:—

To the well-disposed inhabitants of the town of Birmingham, &c.

Whereas the three Children that were mentioned in this Paper to be born at a Birth, and were baptized by the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are alive and well, being near three Months old, and as the Father of the said Children is a Journeyman to a Business which is now dead, a subscription hath been propos'd to be carried on towards

the support of the said Children, and to enable the Mother to have some Help to the looking after them, of which she is now destitute.

Whoever shall be pleased to contribute to their assistance, be the sums ever so small, the Favour will be thankfully acknowledged.

The next item of news is a tragic one, and shows how the military laws were administered in the good days of old. It appears on July 26, 1742 :—

On Saturday last William Putress, a Soldier belonging to the late Lord James Cavendish's Regiment, quartered in this Town, was shot at Titnal Wood, near Wolverhampton, for deserting several Times from the said Regiment.

Up to the year 1748 the postal arrangements in the town were very inadequate. There were only three post days a week between this town and London, and many other places. The high charge for postage had also encouraged and kept up a system of private collection and delivery which was illegal. The announcement of the additional postal facilities, and a warning as to private collection, are conveyed in the following notice :—

Post Office, Birmingham, December 9, 1748.

His Majesty's Post Master General, for the further Improvement of Correspondence, having been pleased to order, That Letters shall, for the future, be convey'd by the Post Six Days in every Week (instead of Three Days as at present), betwixt London and Chipping Norton, Evesham, Worcester, Bromsgrove, and Birmingham, with the intermediate Places; and that these Letters, on the three additional Post Days, shall be convey'd through Oxford.

Public Notice is hereby given, That these additional Conveyances will commence at Christmas next, and whereas great Numbers of Letters have hitherto been privately collected and deliver'd contrary to Law, and to the great Prejudice of the Revenue of the Post Office, all Carriers, Coachmen, Watermen, Wherry-men, Dispensers of Country News Papers, and all other Persons whatsoever any Way concerned in the illegal collecting or delivering of Letters, or Packets of Letters, will be prosecuted with the utmost severity.

N.B.—The Penalty is Five Pounds for every Letter collected or deliver'd contrary to Law, and One Hundred Pounds for every Week this Practice is continued.

By Command of the Post Master General,

JOHN WILSON, Surveyor.

Our next extract reveals a curious state of things, and to our modern notions, is a curious way of remedying them. The statement that "all the parish offices in the town had become troublesome from the largeness of the place" is a strange complaint. But according to Hutton, "from 1741 to the present year, 1780, Birmingham seems to have acquired the amazing augmentation of 71 streets, 4,172 houses, and

25,032 inhabitants. Such a rapid growth is a proof of the wonderful progress of the town." The notice which follows appeared November 25, 1751. It is addressed to the printer of the *Birmingham Gazette*:—

As all the Parish Offices in the Town of Birmingham are become very troublesome, from the largeness of the Place, and particularly Surveyor of the Highways is excessively so, for want of its being in general better understood, many People fancying Statute Duty a Matter of Courtesy, which they may be excus'd from if they please: I beg leave, therefore, to explain the nature of it in brief, in order to save future Trouble, both to the Inhabitants and Officers. The first Thing a Surveyor has to do after he has examined the Condition of the Summons in writing to the several House Keepers, to send Teams and Labourers to do two, three or more Days Work in the Highways as shall be thought necessary; from which no Person or Profession is exempted, as the Law says every Householder, Cottager, and Day Labourer. After this the Surveyors are to give in upon Oath to the Sessions; or two Justices of the Peace, a List of the several Persons; who have neglected or refused to do their respective duty; upon which the Justices send their summons, commanding the Defaulters to appear before them, to shew Cause, if they can why they have neglected or refus'd to do their respective Statute Duty, and why a Warrant of Distress should not be granted to levy the Sums forfeited, on their respective Goods and Chattels, to wit, Four Shillings and Six-pence for three Days Omission of sending a Labourer, and Six-pence the Warrant and Service, and Ten Shillings for each Day's Omission of a Team; which Warrants of Distress will be granted, and put in Execution, if the Sum of Eighteen-pence, Composition Money, be not sent to the Surveyors before Thursday, the 28th instant, when the Justices' Summons are returnable, nor will it be in the Power of the Surveyors to accept of less than the Sum mentioned in the Distress Warrant, which will be Five Shillings.—By inserting the above you'll oblige Yours, &c.

THE SURVEYORS.

On November 4, 1751, appeared a notice on a subject which seems to have caused considerable excitement at the time.

Whereas an Advertisement was put in the *Birmingham Gazette* on Monday last, importing that the Warehouse Keepers and Waggoners had combin'd together to raise the Price of Carriage in an unequal Manner, by which the Author of the same seems uneasy, and pleads for his Casks having a Right to be carried as low as Nails, by saying Twelve-pence the Hundred; This may inform all Gentlemen, Tradesmen, and others, that the said Word Combination is false, malicious, and scandalous; all that they have entered into being no other, than to load and carry no more than is allowed by Act of Parliament; not one Word of Price being mentioned in the said Agreement, every one is left to carry as cheap as he pleases.

The next item of news which we extract shows the intolerance with which the Wesleyan body was at that time treated in the town. The act is said to have been committed by young and thoughtless persons; but when we remember what occurred at a much later date, and from what we know of the state of public opinion from other sources, it is to

be feared that the burning of the pulpit was looked upon as a pleasant escapade, and was not visited by any very strong marks of disapproval.

Birmingham, October 26.—On Monday Night last an attempt was made on the Methodist Meeting in this Town, by some young thoughtless Persons, who took from thence the Pulpit and many of the Seats, and made a Bonfire of them; but by the good Management of the Constables, and some of the principal Inhabitants in that neighbourhood, they were in the morning dispersed.

In this year the question of the rectification of the calendar was introduced, and the bill for "robbing the people of eleven days," as one indignant elector or non-elect after wards charged a candidate for Parliamentary honours with having done, was introduced into Parliament. The intimation of this measure is given in February, 1751, when the public were informed of it by an *ou dit*—" 'Tis said a bill will be brought into the House of Lords to alter our style, agreeable to that of other Nations; and we hear that it is proposed to leave out Eleven Days in the year 1752, viz., from the 9th to the 21st of September."

From the belief which then existed in the efficacy of asses' milk in cases of consumption and other ailments, the demand for milch asses seems to have been very great. The announcements that these then valuable animals were for sale are of frequent occurrence, and their wording is often ludicrously singular. In March, 1751, we read that there are to be sold "two she asses and a Jack one." The trade, if it exist now, takes another method of appealing to the public.

§ 4. EDUCATION AND LITERARY LIFE.

The references to education which we find in the old papers are, like angels' visits, few and far between. There was no thought then of popular education. It was deemed dangerous to teach the people too much. In the cant of the day it unfitted them for their stations, and made them discontented in the situation in which God had placed them. Mechanics' Institutes and Free Libraries would have been thought revolutionary institutions, and would have been intolerable to all. The State would have prohibited, and the Church anathematised them. The working classes would not have appreciated them, and would most probably have joined their superiors in denouncing such new-fangled

notions. To work was all that was required of working men, and what leisure they had was spent in the ale-house, on the skittle-alley, or in training dogs or cocks for the indulgence in brutal sports. Nearly all the efforts to remove ignorance, and to ameliorate the condition of the people have been made in our own day, and working-men's clubs such as have been established in various towns at the present time would have been impossible. Comparatively few of the artisans and mechanics could either read or write. These acquirements, which a great authority tells us come by nature, did not come to the working man of the eighteenth century. He was left to himself and his own devices. It is sometimes said that we run into the opposite extreme, and too often patronise and coddle those of the "fustian jacket and horny hands." This may be so; but it is only the natural reaction arising from the consciousness of long centuries of oppression and neglect. The feeling that we are our brother's keeper is of late growth, and if in attempting to give it practical effect we sometimes err and mistake the road, it is not to be wondered at. Any foolish vagaries which we may commit in our efforts to dispel the dark, dense ignorance which once oppressed the land—to lessen the miseries of the poor—to improve their dwellings and to make life more beautiful to them, are preferable to the cold callousness which marked the conduct of our ancestors in such matters. We look upon the efforts to raise the mass of our population as among the most blessed, encouraging, and healthy signs of the present generation.

The first instance of lectures not actually delivered, but likely to be given, which we meet with, occurs in November, 1742; and in this case the subject is a scientific one. It is entered under the head of Coventry, November 13, and runs thus:—

We hear that Mr. Gabriel Holland, Watch Maker in this City, has just compleated in Miniature, that noble and useful Engine for raising Water (out of Coal and other Mines) by Fire, and we hope to have a correct and satisfactory Description of its Principles demonstrated by him in a Course of Mechanical and Experimental Philosophy.

In the paper for April 27, 1747, we find the following announcement:—

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and the Science of Geography Taught after the most New and expeditious Manner, by Benjamin Simpson, in Peck Lane, Birmingham, on the following easy Terms—

1. That as he is determined to do his duty by such Children as shall be committed to his Care, no more than Twelve at a Time will be admitted.

2. Each Child at his Entrance to pay 2s. 6d., and 1s. per week afterwards.

N.B.—For the Advantage of such who are willing to retrieve a neglected Education, the School will be kept each evening, from Six to Eight o'clock.

* * Letters wrote and Papers transcribed with the utmost Secrecy and Fidelity.

In August of the same year we have an advertisement of a course of philosophical lectures brought before the public in the following manner :—

Mr. Martin hereby proposes a second Subscription to his Course of Philosophical Lectures now reading in this Town, and to begin on Wednesday next at Mr. Taylor's in the Cherry Orchard, at Four o'clock, if twenty shall subscribe. Gentlemen and Ladies disposed to attend the same, by communicating their Names to T. Aris, or Mr. Warren, Booksellers, or to Mr. Taylor, will greatly oblige their very humble Servant,

B. MARTIN.

Syllabus's to be had at the above Places.

Dancing was taught in those days as now, and in the advertisements special reference is always made to "French dances." The one copied here bears date April 25, 1748 :—

This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen and Ladies, that are disposed to let their children learn French Dances, that by applying to Harry Barton, in Smallbrook Street, Birmingham, they may be sure to meet with proper Attendance, and due Care taken to bring their Children forwards in the Art of French Dancing.—N.B. I purpose to begin on Monday, the 2nd day of May, and to continue the same Days as the late Mrs. Eades did, which are Mondays and Thursdays ; and all Gentlemen and Ladies that are pleased to favour me with their Children, may depend on the utmost Care being taken, by their most obedient servant, HARRY BARTON.

On April 23, 1750, a series of lectures is announced. It is worthy of remark, that although the place and hours are given at which the lectures will take place, the name of the lecturer nowhere occurs :—

At Mr. Packwood's Great Room in the Cherry Orchard, Birmingham. This present Monday the 23rd Instant, exactly at Eleven o'Clock in the Morning, will Begin, a Lecture upon the Mechanical Powers, as they are commonly called, with an Explanation of Wheel Carriages ; and at Five o'Clock in the Afternoon will be an Explanation of Compound Engines, and several Working Models. On Tuesday and Wednesday will give an Explanation of all Sorts of Water Works, and how Water may be raised in the cheapest Manner, to supply Gentlemen's Houses, Towns, and Villages, with an Explanation of the Diver's Bell, and many other Experiments. On Thursday and Friday, the Nature of Vision or Light will be explained, with the Dissection of a Natural Eye, likewise an Artificial Eye, and a curious Artificial Ear ; with many other Experiments. Saturday Afternoon the Lecture will consist of Miscellaneous Experiments in several Branches. N.B. The Lectures begin every Day exactly at Eleven in the Morning, and Five in the Afternoon.

In 1748, an exhibition, which may be considered of an educational character, was open in the town. The detailed description of the announcement is as curious as the collection itself. They certainly possessed the accomplishment of "drawing up" advertisements in those days :—

Birmingham, May 7, 1748.

To the Curious.—A Description of the Four Hundred Fine Figures in Sculpture, Being a beautiful Representation in Marble of our Saviour's Life, from the Institution of the Lord's Supper to his Resurrection: Found among the great Treasure taken by the Prince Frederick and Duke Privateers: and are now to be seen at Shakespear's Head, opposite the Welch Cross. Among the Liberal Arts which have adorn'd the World both in this and past Ages, that of Sculpture has always been highly esteemed therein: And this Art among the old Romans was so nearly allied to Poetry, that it appears doubtful among the Learned, whether the Poets drew their descriptions from the Works of the Statuaries, or the Statuaries formed their Designs from the Description of the Poets. It is indeed generally allow'd that the Ancients, notwithstanding all the disadvantages under which their Performances are now seen, far surpassed the Moderns in the Art of Sculpture: But we imagine that this Superiority may even be disputed in these six Pieces in Relievo, mentioned in the following list, in these Representations of Scripture Transactions, the Designs are so just, the Attitudes so proper, the Proportions so true, and the Drapery so flowing and easy, that Fancy itself can form nothing of the Kind more excellent. But above all these Distinctions, the Features and Passions of the different Ages and Sexes are so natural and emphatically represented, that at first View their various Sentiments may be discover'd from their various Aspects; the same Countenances are also easily known in the different Pieces, although represented in the different Passions and Circumstances. The more nearly these fine Pieces are inspected, the more exquisite the Workmanship appears; and as the same Turn of Elegance and Beauty displays itself throughout the whole, they must undoubtedly have been the Labour of one and the same Artist; a labour of at least twenty years. It is not therefore surprising that such Extraordinary Curiosities were designed as a present for the French King: For this Purpose they were brought from Lima in the French South Sea Ships taken by the Prince Frederick and the Duke Privateers, and brought into Bristol. And now these beautiful Pieces are exhibited to View at Shakespear's Head, opposite the Welch Cross.

1. Our Saviour eating his Last Supper with his Disciples.
2. He is betrayed by Judas; with Peter cutting off the High Priest's Servant's Ear.
3. He is scourged in the Hall before Pontius Pilate.
4. He is fainting under the Cross, as he is led to Crucifixion, with Simon compelled to carry it.
5. Joseph of Arimathea taking the Body down from the Cross.
6. His appearance to the Holy Women, after his Resurrection, at the City of Galilee.

The above Curiosities have been view'd by most of the Nobility, Clergy, Gentry, and principal Inhabitants of Bath, Bristol, and Oxford, and other great Cities in this Kingdom, who express'd an entire satisfaction in the admirable Beauty.

N.B. The Proprietors have been offered One Thousand Guineas for the above

Curiosities. Price 1s., 6d., and 3d. Attendance will be given from Nine in the Morning till Nine at Night.

Nor must it be supposed that it was left for our modern traders to invent poetic advertisements. The muse was wooed in those days to depict the delights of a pleasantly situated inn, as she is now to glorify the tailors' coat, or the grocers' tea. A remarkable instance of this occurs in July, 1750. The landlord of the Bell had a soul above "mugs," and Sir John Falstaff himself would have dubbed him a good fellow. Here is his poem, which may be called a Public-house Idyll :—

To all Gentlemen, Tradesmen, &c., Give me Leave to inform you, that the House known by the sign of the Bell, on the Chester Road, [Erdington] near Cuckoo's Corner, has lately been put in very neat repair, where you may depend of being accommodated in the most obliging Manner, by your humble Servant, WILLIAM HAYNES.

The under-written will give you a more distinct Idea of the above-named House :—

Here Nature smiles, and here the blooming Spring,
 Emits her Sweets, indulgent, unconfin'd ;
 Each Hill and Dale decks with her gaudy Trim,
 To please the Eye, or charm the human Mind.
 Our home-bred Flocks in Thousands here are seen,
 Whose bleating Echo fills a neighbouring Grove ;
 And larger Cattle daily spread our Green,
 Witness the numerous oxen in each Drove.
 In these green Lanes the Cuckow sings,
 Here talks the mimic Jay ;
 Here the pale Primrose early springs ;
 And here the Black Bird sweetly sings to usher in the May.
 'Tis here the Flying Coaches speed their way
 And Equipages grand, with pompous show
 All Colours display, so brilliant they,
 When noble Lords to Senate go.
 Here runs the Fox, and here the Hare is seen,
 Most pleasing to the Sportman's Sight,
 Hounds in full Cry pursue them o'er the Green,
 Here rides a 'Squire, there a Baronet.
 'Tis here the early Lark, whose Note
 You hear at Prime of Day ;
 'Tis here the Thrussel swells his Throat
 And sings in tuneful Lay.
 Here Robin whistles to his Team
 As he stalks by his Plow ;
 And Cicely she, as blithe as he
 Sings to her brindled Cow.

Here works the Ant and curious Bee
 Whose Instinct seems Man's Reason to excel,
 Governed by Laws, yet always free
 Their Rights maintain, but ne'er rebel.
 Which way soe'er we cast our Eyes,
 With Nature's Works, they're always blest.
 So great, so wonderful, so wise
 The Atheist stands a fool confest.
 Here Churches and Chapels in one Prospect rise
 Shewing the Zeal of Ages, gone before,
 Thus the fix'd Planets beautify the Skies,
 Proclaim a God, and bid Mankind adore.
 Such are the Pleasures of this Place
 So free, so unconfin'd ;
 When my Friends appear around me here,
 They more than charm my mind.

The local poetry of that day was—well, we will not say what it was, but give our readers a few specimens by which they can judge for themselves. Acrostics seem to have been a favourite mode of writing with the “ingenuous youth” of old Birmingham. One of these “effusions” appeared in January, 1751, but it is not worth quoting. It was, however, rather prolific in its results, for it inspired two other “poems,” which appeared respectively in March and April, 1751 :—

On seeing an Acrostic in Praise of Miss N—y W—s.

When Beauty spreads her lovely Charms,
 We kindle at the Sight ;
 To please the Fair, the Coward arms,
 The Dunce attempts to write.
 But who would Nancy's Beauties tell,
 Or half her virtues name ;
 First let him count the Drops that Swell
 The River's boundless Stream.
 Then cease, vain Youth, to rack thy brain
 Tho' urg'd by fond Desire.
 Her Praise exceeds thy utmost strain
 “Thy Duty's to admire.”

To the Author of the Verses on the late Acrostic.

When Envy spreads her sable Wings,
 And takes her gloomy Flight
 Then his weak Bow the Coward strings
 Then Zoilus must write.
 Each Champion yield the Palm to Thee,
 Thou first-born Son of Fame;

Who counts the Drops that swells the Sea,
Alone deserves the Dame.

Go on, brave Youth, Success attend
Thy Scheme; but, O beware!
For if thy Means don't reach the End
"Thy Province is Dispair."

He must have been a curious specimen of the "rhyming herd" who could write such lines as the following in a "fit of sickness." We fancy, while reading them, that after recovery the writer would have been admirably fitted to have played "The Lonely Man of the Ocean," had that play existed in his time.

Written July 21, in a Fit of Sickness.

Alas! how slow these moping minutes run:
To me the Day beams Light and Warmth in vain;
The Muses, too, like other Females, shun
The Air of Anguish and the Mind of Pain.
Hence the poor Pity of the Crowd we prove;
For who regards with Feeling the Distressed?
Joy, Ease, or Interest, Mortals paint like love;
But all are temporary Friends at best.
Come Melancholly, then (thou ever nigh,
Attend'st the joyless in the lonely Shade),
And, save the dear enthusiastic Sigh,
Let not a Breath my pensive Hours invade.
Thrice happy he, who, smiling at his Fate,
Glows with the Prospect of a Life to come;
Where one dread Level Misery and State
Find in ideal Scenes beyond the Tomb. M. J.

On the first of April (inauspicious day), 1751, a local bard gives us the following poem. It will be seen that at that time England was visited by an accumulation of evils. Foreign war, intestine tumults, popery, slavery, and a cattle plague afflicted the land, and the verses are written in propitiation of these terrible scourges:—

To the Printer of the *Birmingham Gazette*.—By inserting the following lines, you'll oblige yours, &c.:—

Long hath our Isle (the Seat of every Vice)
Sustain'd the Weight of Heav'n's avenging Hand;
Destructive War the Wrath of God display'd,
And Britons perish'd in a foreign Land.
Intestine Tumults next our Isle invade,
And Popery with Slavery combined;

The one prepar'd our Bodies to enchain,
 The other destin'd to enslave our Mind.
 Meanwhile our Cattle felt the deadly Stroke,
 A grievous Murrain thro' the Nation ran;
 From us Almighty Love transferr'd the Blow
 And harmless Creatures dy'd for sinful Man.
 These Ills, tho' great, without Concern we viewed,
 Still to new Crimes each Day, each Hour gave Birth;
 Kind Heav'n yet further Signs of Anger shewed,
 And strong Convulsions shook th' astonish'd Earth.
 These proved in vain; But now our God, provok'd,
 Hath to our Sins severest Warning given;
 Our Prince,* our joy, just Providence hath ta'en,
 And snatched him from a guilty Land to Heaven.
 Britons be wise, at length be taught to fear;
 The Hand of God is always sure, tho' slow;
 Repent, that angry Heaven your King may spare;
 Repentance will avert th' impending blow.

A poem on Birmingham, written a hundred and fifty years since, possesses an interest for Birmingham people which is altogether independent of any poetic power the verses may display. On January 28, 1751, such a poem appeared in the *Gazette*. It is written in the manner of Spenser, and as a literary production is not without considerable merit. Its chief attraction to us, however, is that we have in this poem the effect which the town then produced on a thoughtful and cultivated mind—for every line of the poem shows the writer to have possessed both a thoughtful and a cultivated mind. We know—and the readers of this volume know—what the town was at the time in which the poem was written. To the author's mind it was a town rich in performance, and richer in promise. "Beneath a fable's thin disguise," he gives us the origin of the place, even then famous for virtues, riches, "nice mechanic arts," and "various merchandise." Birmingham was the offspring of the union of Industry and Genius, and she has since proved how well she deserved such a parentage. The race thus produced has gone on progressing until from the little hardware village the town has become the toy-shop of the world. And it may now be said by her children, as this poet said so long ago, still

Their useful thews, and curious arts proclaim
 To all the admiring world, from what rare stock they came.

* Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II., who died March, 1751, aged 44.

With this brief introduction we shall allow the poem to speak for itself:—

INDUSTRY AND GENIUS;
OR, THE
ORIGIN OF BIRMINGHAM.

A FABLE

Attempted in the Manner of Spenser.

Inscribed to Mr. B—

I.

O B——! in whom, tho' rare, unite
The Spirit of Industrie and eke the Ray
Of bright inventive Genius; while I write,
Do Thou with Candour listen to the Lay
Which to fair Birmingham the Muse shall pay,
Marking beneath a Fable's thin Disguise,
The Virtues its Inhabitants display;
Those Virtues, whence their Fame, Their Riches rise,
Their nice mechanic Arts, their various Merchandise.

2.

On Avon's winding Bank, with Flowers besprent,
Whilom y-dwelt a thrifty, sober Swaine,
On Care and Labour aye he was intent,
And lowing Herds, and Flocks upon the Plaine,
And plenteous Crops, rewarded well his Pain:
Cheap his Attire, and frugal were his Meals;
His Bags were swelled with no dishonest Gain,
A hard rough Hand the Source of Wealth reveals,
Ne idle Hour he knows, ne Weariness he feels.

3.

Hight Industrie was he, of Parents poor,
But soon by Labour, he removen had
Their Poverty; and from his well-got store
Their aged Limbs with Decency y-clad;
But now, alas! their Bosoms waxen sad,
That he, their only Child, ne Wife essays,
Ne little Grandlings brought their Hearts to glad
With idle Parlance, and with childish Plays
To cheer, and lengthen out the Evening of their Days.

4.

But near at Hand, in Bower of Jessamy
And Roses, mixt with rare and curious Art,
A Maiden dwelt, so fair, that only she
Was Theme of every Tongue, and every Heart,
Yet few to claim her Love might boast Desert.

Sith to her Beauty joined, was clearly seen
 A Wit so bright, a Mind with every Part
 Of Science so adorn'd, that well I ween
 Her meed in antient Greece had been the Muses Queen.

5.

All in the clear Conception of her Mind,
 The fairest Forms of Things depainted were,
 And the least Shade of Difference she would find
 'Twixt every object brought into compare,
 Grace still distinguish'd her Productions rare
 From those of common Artists : Her nice Hand
 Obedient was to execute, with Care
 And Elegance, her Fancy's least Command :
 Geniæ y-clep'd she was, admired by all the Land.

6.

It chance'd as on a Day the careful Wight
 On Hill and Dale, in Field and Meadow sought
 A wandering Ewe, stray'd from his Flock by Night,
 That Fortune to her Bower his Footsteps brought ;
 He gaz'd, admired, and soon her Beauty wrought
 His Heart to Love. He woo'd the peerless Maid,
 And long with humble Zeal her smile besought ;
 The Blush of yielding Modesty betrayed
 At length her vanquish'd Heart and mutual Love displayed.

7.

This happy Union soon produc'd a Race
 Of docile Sons, in whom the Mother's Mind
 Her Ingenuity and matchless Grace
 Shone with the Father's Perseverance join'd,
 And now to social Amity inclined
 A Town they builden straight, hight Birmingham,
 Where still their numerous Offspring dwell combin'd,
 Whose useful Thewes, and curious Arts proclaim
 To all th' admiring World, from what rare Stock they came.

We should very much like to know who was the author of this poem. The Mr. B. to whom it was inscribed was the famous Birmingham printer, John Baskerville.

In February, 1751, another poem on Birmingham was printed. It purports to be a letter written by a Birmingham mechanic to a friend at Warwick, and according to the correspondent who communicates it to the printer, it was written as early as 1733. The lines contain a more detailed account of the productions of the town than we might have expected in so early a production.

To the Printer of the *Birmingham Gazette*.—The Origin of Birmingham, a Fable, lately printed in your Paper, brought to my Mind the following Letter, wrote in the year 1733, the giving which a Place in your next, may not prove disagreeable to your Readers, and will oblige

Your humble Servant,

A. Z.

A Letter from a Mechanick in the busy Town of Birmingham, to Mr. Stayner, a Carver, Statuary, and Architect, in the sleepy Corporation of Warwick.

Dear Friend

If you can leave your Borough, still and fair,
 To breathe awhile in more sulphureous Air;
 Can leave the Place where Heroes first drew breath,
 And, worn with toils, return'd and courted death;
 The Place for Cradles, or for Tombs so fit,
 Where Morpheus, undisturb'd, can nodding sit
 With Ease in silent slumbers bear the Sway,
 And influence you all both Night and Day;
 Then raise your Head, and rub each heavy Eye,
 And to your Nostrils Hellebore apply;
 When broad awake, for Vulcan's Province steer
 Each Cyclop will rejoice, to see famed Stayner here,
 Nor fancy Semnos' Caves with Forges found,
 Or ponderous Hammers there on Anvils bound.
 If full North West, twice seven miles you go
 You'll see the cloud above, the thund'ring Town below,
 Boldly advance, nor Salamanders fear,
 You'll be convinc'd that Vulcan's Forge is here;
 That here Æneas' Shield divine was made,
 Achilles' Armour, Hector's dreadful Blade;
 Here Guns and Swords Cyclopean Hands divide,
 And here with glittering Arms the World is still supply'd.
 Here Implements, and Toys, for distant Parts,
 Of various Metals, by mechanic Arts,
 Are finely wrought, and by the Artists sold,
 Whose touch turns every Metal into Gold;
 But 'tis in vain, alas! we boast our Skill;
 Wanting thy Arts, we are deficient still.
 Oh! come and join us, teach us to excel
 In Casting, Carving, and in Building well;
 Yet here delightful Fabricks* you'll behold
 Of Iron, Brass, and artificial Gold;
 In these great Mulciber's chief Factors dwell
 Whilst he's retir'd to his awful Cell;
 Beneath Old Wedgb-ry's† burning Banks it lies,
 Where Thousands of his Slaves, with glaring Eyes,
 Around him wait, or near him do reside
 In Subterraneous Caverns, deep and wide;

* The Money that built them was got by these metals.

† Wednesbury, famous for Coal Mines, and subterraneous Fires.

Where, by their Chief's Command, they sap like Moles,
 Supplying every Smithy Hearth with Coals;
 There let them delve, whilst in the growing Town
 In jolly Bacchanals our Cares we drown.
 Come, Stayner, come, then shall the circling glass
 From Friend to Friend, in sparkling Brimmers pass;
 To Arts and Science every Bowl shall flow,
 'Till we as great as the old Grecians grow,
 'Till then farewell, thou Son of famous Angelo.

Long before Mr. H. H. Horton invoked the muse to "waft him to St. Philip's height," in order that he might survey the town whose laureate he proposed to become, the praises of Birmingham had been sung in "pleasant fable and in lofty line." A month preceding the appearance of the poem quoted above, Mr. Brodin delivered a prologue at the theatre "in praise of the town." In December, 1750, the local playgoers listened to the following lines. Considered as poetry, they are infinitely below the fable, but to the present generation they will not be without their interest, and so we reproduce them:—

A PROLOGUE (spoke at the Theatre in Birmingham, in praise of the town by Mr. Brodin):—

Athens, in Days of Yore, for Arts was fam'd,
 And Rome's immortal Glory stands proclaim'd,
 A Theme of no less Honour claims our Praise,
 Too Great, too copious, for my scanty Phrase,
 A Town which Virgil's self might nobly own;
 In its Description he atchiev'd Renown.
 Here Clink of Hammers, and repeating Blows
 Of warlike Sledges, terrify its Foes.
 To you from Norway, Sweden, and from Spain
 Incessant sails do plough the boistrous Main,
 From different Climes they steer each well-fraught Keel
 Of plated Iron, or unpolish'd Steel,
 Which wrought and burnish'd by the Artist's File,
 They wond'ring gaze, nor know their Native Soil.
 To trace the various Branches of each Art,
 Transcends my Skill, altho' how fain my Heart.
 Some Bard endow'd with more poetic Fire
 Must finish that to which I can't aspire.
 A nobler Subject Poet never chose,
 A Maze wherein his Fancy he may lose.
 Here Raphael or Da Vinci may divide
 With Brother Artists too the Pencil's Pride.
 No more let Semnos boast, her Artist God
 In Birmingham has fix'd his best Abode;

Venus attends him with a Look serene,
 And Paphos mourns to lose her Cyprian Queen.
 Thus blest with every Grace the Powers can give,
 May Birmingham long flourish, and e'er live.

To the hope expressed in the last line, we most devoutly respond,
 amen!

§ 5. AMUSEMENTS.

The amusements in which our forefathers indulged were for the most part, more cruel than refined. Cock-fighting, bull-baiting, dog-fighting, and similar pleasant (!) sports were pursued with a zeal and an earnestness proportionate to their cruelty. With the exception of bull-baiting, it is sad to think that these cruel sports are still indulged in, not only by the lower classes, but by those whose position in society and education ought to make them blush at seeking their pleasure in such brutal, disgusting, and degrading pursuits. The tone of society has, however, improved materially on these subjects. The law has pronounced against them; and the depraved appetite which seeks the excitement of such inhuman displays for the gratification of its unhealthy and perverted taste must now seek them in secret, with closed doors, and the dread of the law always before them. This is an improvement, and is a good mark by which to measure the progress of education, and to test the refining influences of those arts which Ovid tells us "softens the manners and polishes the parts." But a century and a half ago these cruel sports were pursued openly and without fear. No sense of their cruelty appears to have troubled the public conscience. They were advertised as regularly as other amusements, and their coming off recorded as bits of news in which all classes were interested. Cock-fighting was the favourite entertainment of this kind, and the announcements that mains of cocks will be fought are almost more frequent than are those of all other amusements put together. Hutton says, writing of the amusements of the people:—"The relaxations of the humbler classes are fives, quoits, skittles, and ale." The last three remain; what has become of fives we have no knowledge; perhaps it has shared the fate of the more obnoxious sports about which the historian is silent, but which the newspapers of the time make only too

apparent. One or two of these announcements will suffice to illustrate the times. In June, 1746, we read:—

This is to give Notice,—That there will be a Main of Cocks fought at Duddeston Hall, near Birmingham, betwixt the Gentlemen of Warwickshire and Worcestershire, for Four Guineas a Battle, and Forty Guineas the Main. To weigh on Monday, the 9th of June, and fight the two following Days.

It appears that all the festivals, such as Shrovetide, Easter, Whitsuntide, and so on, were celebrated by matches of this sort. On the 1st of June, 1747, the following advertisement appears:—

Birmingham Cock Match, 1747.—On Whitsun Monday, the 8th of June, will be shewn at Duddeston Hall, near Birmingham, in Warwickshire, Forty-one Cocks on each Side, for a Match to be fought the three following Days, betwixt the Gentlemen of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire, for Ten Guineas a Battle, and Two Hundred the Odd Battle; and also Twenty-one Cocks on each Side, for bye Battles, which Bye Battles are to be fought for Two Guineas each Battle.

As a proof of the public interest taken in these sports, it may be mentioned that the same space is given to report the occurrence of a cock-fight as is given to the record of assizes, royal birth-day celebrations, theatrical performances, fires, and other public events. The report of the match announced in the above advertisement is thus given in the paper on the Monday following:—"On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday was fought at Duddeston Hall, near this Town, a Match of Forty-one Cocks on each side, fed by Mr. Howell of London, and by Mr. Beesley of this Town, which was won by Mr. Beesley, tho' very great Odds were laid against him."

These events were often advertised two or three months in advance. Thus on February 29, 1748, we are informed that

On Monday the 11th of April, 1748, being Easter Monday, will be a Match of Cocks weigh'd to fight the three following Days at Duddeston Hall, near Birmingham, each Party to weigh Forty-one Cocks, for ten Guineas a Battle, and two Hundred the Main; and each Party to weigh Twenty Cocks for Bye Battles, for Five Guineas a Battle, each Cock to give and take Half an Ounce. The Gentlemen of Worcester and Herefordshire against the Gentlemen of Warwickshire and Staffordshire.

And the paper for April 18 of the same year contains the following report of the amusements:—

On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday last was fought at Duddeston Hall, near this Town, between the gentlemen of Worcestershire and Warwickshire, a match of Cocks for ten Guineas a Battle, and two Hundred the Main, and the Bye Battles at Five Guineas each. The Battles won on the Main were equal on each side, and the Odds in the Bye Battles were two in favour of the Gentlemen of Warwickshire.

Similar advertisements appear for Bridgnorth, Stoke, Worcester, Wellington, Dudley, Lichfield, and in fact for all the surrounding towns, so common and so public was this once most popular sport.

Theatrical amusements seem to have been popular at this time, for we read of no less than three places at which plays were acted. There was a theatre in New Street, a new theatre in Smallbrook Street, and another new theatre in Moor Street. The two latter, however, were not licensed for dramatic performances, and their managers resorted to the practice of the man in the streets who sells you a straw and gives you a book. A concert was performed, for admission to which a charge was made, and then the play and afterpiece were "given gratis." The first announcement we have relating to the New Street Theatre is that of the benefit of Mr. Miller and his wife. Mr. Miller, it will be seen, was a "free and accepted" Mason. The notice appeared on January 31, 1743 :—

This Evening will be acted, at the Play-House in New Street, for the Benefit of Mr. Miller and his Wife, that celebrated Comedy called the Mourning Bride ; and for the Entertainment of the Brethren of the Antient Society of Free and Accepted Masons, will be spoke the Prologue and Epilogue made in Honour of the Society : and the several Brotherly Songs will be sung.

On the 18th of May, 1747, the following editorial notice appeared :—

We are inform'd from Wisbech, that Mr. Herbert's Company of Comedians will be here, and open the Theatre in Moor Street, on Monday the First of June, with a Tragedy, call'd the Siege of Damascus, with proper Dresses to every Character, and Scenes and Decorations proper to the play.

Our next is a curious notice of a performance to be given on the first of June, 1747. It does not appear as an advertisement, but as news, although one bit of information given is as delicate a specimen of the puff judicious that it has ever been our lot to read. The last sentence also shows how widely the reform in dress introduced by Garrick and other great actors was spreading. It is true that the so-called interpreter and restorer of Shakspeare played Hamlet in a court suit, but he effected many reforms in the dressing and mounting of pieces, which have, we hope, now reached the culminating point. But to make our extract :—

June 1st, 1747.—This evening, at the Theatre in Moor Street, by Mr. Herbert's Company, will be acted a Play, called the Siege of Damascus, *wrote by Mr. John Hughes, who died for Joy on its success after the first Night's Performance.* He chose this Story to

convince Mankind (as he often declar'd) that amongst Turks the Principles of Honour and Morality were not unknown, and by the character of Phocyas, that he, the invincible else, was to be subdued by Love. To pretend to explain to an audience what they beforehand know, or are to expect, is anticipating their Pleasure, or a Presumption on their Understanding. This play has been constantly honour'd in London by the most Brilliant Audiences. 'Tis therefore to be hop'd what has been encourag'd there, will at least be look'd at here by all Lovers of Learning and Taste. *All the Characters in this Play will be dress'd in the proper Habits, as the Turks and Greeks there appear'd.*

In the same paper we read a report of the performance on the previous Friday, at the Smallbrook Street Theatre :—

The Play of "The Earl of Essex," and the celebrated Entertainment of "Harlequin's Vagaries, or the Burgomaster Trick'd," were perform'd on Friday Evening at the New Theatre in Smallbrook Street, to a crowded Audience, with universal Applause ; and, by particular Desire, the same Entertainment, with the Comedy of Love for Love, written by Mr. Congreve, (and several Entertainments of Singing and Dancing between the Acts) are to be performed There this Evening. The Company will continue in Town six Weeks, and no longer.

On the 15th of June, 1847, "Hamlet" is thus announced as the play for the night :—"This Evening at the Theatre in Moor Street will be presented a *Tragedy, called "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark."* On the same Evening the Smallbrook Street company produced "Othello," so that the legitimate drama seems to have been popular. The performance is thus announced :—

At the New Theatre in Smallbrook Street, this Evening will be acted a Celebrated Tragedy, call'd Othello, Moor of Venice, written by the famous Shakespeare, to which (by desire) will be added a diverting Ballad Opera, call'd The Devil to Pay ; or, the Wives Metamorphos'd, with Singing between the Acts. The Company will continue to act Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, for one Month, and no longer, beginning exactly at Seven o'clock.

We quote a short advertisement to show our readers the manner in which the performances were then announced. It is taken from the paper of August 4, 1746.

At the New Theatre in Moor Street, This present Evening, will be perform'd A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Musick. Boxes, 2s. 6d. Pit, 2s. First Gal., 1s. Upper Gal., 6d. Between the two Parts of the Concert will be presented (Gratis) a Comedy, called "THE MISER." The Part of Lovegold the Miser by Mr. Breeze, Frederick by Mr. Smith, Clerimont by Mr. Slaiter, Ramilie by Mr. Wignell, James by Mr. Whitaker, Decoy by Mr. Child, Lift the Taylor by Mr. Waher, Mariana by Mrs. Slaiter, Harriet by Mrs. Wignell, Mrs. Wisely by Mrs. Child, Wheedle by Mrs. Smith, and the Part of Lappett by Mrs. Whitaker. To which will be added an Opera, call'd "The Mock Doctor ; or the Dumb Lady Cur'd." The Part of the Doctor by Mr. Whitaker, Dorcas by Mr. Slaiter, Leander by Mr. Child, Sir Jasper by Mr. Breeze, Dumb Lady by Mrs. Whitaker. To begin exactly at Seven O'clock.

Man's ingenuity in devising amusements has ever been tolerably active, and we find that in old Birmingham the people had plenty of opportunities given them for sight-seeing. In the announcement to be quoted next, mechanical skill of rather a high order is evinced in the production of an extraordinary musical clock, which was exhibited in 1742. On March 8 of that year this advertisement appeared :—

For the entertaining amusement of the Quality, Gentry, and others.—There is to be seen and heard, at the Sign of the Wheat Sheaf, in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, [a Curious and Unparallel'd Musical Clock, made by David Lockwood, going by Springs Only, being a Machine, incomparable in its Kind, as well for the Beauty of its Structure as the Nicety and Perfection of its Performance. Its compositions are admirable, and far more elegant than any yet extant, being the choicest Airs taken out of the best Operas, with graces ingeniously intermix'd. Together with French Horn Pieces upon the Organ, German and Common Flute, Flageolet, &c., to the great satisfaction of the most eminent Masters and Judges, as Sonatas, Concertos, Marches, Minuets, Jigs and Scotch Airs, compos'd by Corelli, Alberoni, Mr. Handel, Dr. Bradley, and other eminent Masters. This beautiful and harmonious Machine may be seen (if desir'd) at any time of the Day by half a Dozen ; but the Common Hours of shewing are Eleven in the Morning and Six at Night. Price Twelve Pence and Six Pence.

Note.—The above Clock plays a Piece of Music every Four Hours of itself, and at Pleasure; is wound up once in Eight Days, and is now to be sold by Edmund Rising, the Owner. This Piece was never here before, nor the like seen. Any Persons that are curious, and desire to see the inside Work, shall be welcome. Our stay in this town will be very short.

Wax Work Exhibitions have always had great attractions for a large class of sight-seers. Nor were our ancestors without this source of amusement. In June, 1746, a collection of wax figures was exhibited in Birmingham, the nature of which will be gathered from the following advertisement :—

This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen, Ladies, and Others, That there is come to this Town from Fleet Street, near Temple Bar, London, and is now to be seen at the Chamber over the Old Cross, The Royal Wax Work, representing the Royal Family of Great Britain, richly dress'd, and in full Proportion, as they appear at St. James's on the King's Birthday Day, the late Queen Caroline being dress'd in a Suit of her own Cloaths. They are esteem'd by all who have seen them, the most beautiful Work that has ever been seen in the Kingdom, being valued at Five Hundred Pounds, and have been shewn to most of the Nobility of the Kingdom with great satisfaction. N.B. They will be shewn from Ten in the Morning till Nine at Night, and the Company entertained with Variety of Musick, Vocal and Instrumental; the latter perform'd on a Chamber Organ, with two Sets of Keys: the full Organ, with the stops as follow: Stop Diapason, the Trumpet Stop, the Principal Stop, the Coronet and Fifteenth, the Chair Organ and Flute Stops. Price Six-pence and Three-pence.

But the musical clock and the wax works must "pale their ineffectual" powers before the wonderful collection of works of art exhibited in May, 1749. The advertisement gives full details, and will be read with interest at the present time:—

This is to acquaint the Curious, that at the Black Boy in Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, this and every Evening during his Stay in Town, Mr. Yeates, from London, will exhibit a Grand, Curious and Splendid Representation of the Temple of Apollo, at Delphos in Greece. Being the Temple to which Alexander the Great went to inquire who was his Father; whether he had reveng'd his Death on all his Enemies; and where the Heathens of Old repair'd in Times of private Distress, or public danger. This admirable Piece of Art is adorn'd with every Thing that can render it pleasing to the Spectator, having curious Pillars of Lapis Lazuli, and embellish'd with Painting in an elegant Manner. Phaeton is represented petitioning Apollo to let him drive the Chariot of the Sun, which being granted occasions the Fall of Phaeton, who wanting judgment to conduct the Chariot of the Sun thro' the Mid Air, had like, thro' this Misconduct, to have set the World on Fire; but was destroy'd by a Thunderbolt from Jupiter, and thrown headlong into the River Padus in Italy, otherwise called Eridanus. Likewise the Triumphs of Bacchus and Ariadne, represented in a grand and magnificent manner, and adorned with all the Ornaments and Decorations which can fill the Mind with pleasing Ideas, and charm a judicious and curious Spectator. Likewise a curious Organ, which performs several select Pieces of Musick, composed by the best Masters.

N.B. The Machine is in Height twelve Feet, in Breadth nine, and in Depth seven, and not seen through any Glass. In order to afford the Virtuosi an agreeable Amusement, Mr. Yeates will perform his inimitable Dexterity of Hands: Who, for his Cards, and the clean Conveyance of his Outlandish Birds, that Talk very agreeably at the Word of command, together with his sudden and surprising production of an Apple-Tree, which he causes to Grow, Blossom, and bear Ripe Fruit fit for any Person to Eat of it in less than three Minutes' Time; and several other surprising Tricks is allowed, by the curious, to excel all other Performers. Pit 1s. Upper Seats 6d. The Doors to be opened at Six o'Clock, and begin at Seven. Gentlemen or Ladies may have a private Performance, giving two Hours' Notice.

There was a popular place of amusement at Aston, which was well known till within a very few years. At the Apollo Tea Gardens concerts used to be given, fire-works discharged, balloon ascents made, and dancing *al fresco*, as well as within doors, afforded the people of the day a round of amusements, in which they readily participated. Then, as now, the inclemency of the weather was a source of much anxiety to out-of-door pleasure seekers; and one advertisement, taken from the *Gazette* of May 9, 1748, contains the announcement of the postponement of a performance on this account, and will give our readers an idea of the entertainments which were given at these once celebrated gardens.

Whereas the Performance of Music and Fire-Works, at Bridgman's Gardens, at the Apollo at Aston, near Birmingham, was to have been on Thursday last, but the Inclemency of the Weather preventing 'tis postpon'd to next Thursday Evening, when a grand Trio of Mr. Handel's out of *Acis and Galatea*, and that favourite Duet of Mr. Arne's call'd *Damon and Chloe*, will be perform'd by Mr. Bridgman, and a Gentleman of the Town.

These extracts sufficiently prove that the people of the old town knew how to enjoy themselves, and that they had ample opportunities of doing so.

§ 6 MANNERS, CUSTOMS, ETC., ETC.

The manners and customs of those days also receive some curious illustrations from the old newspapers. Wives seem to have very frequently eloped from their liege lords, and the advertisements announcing the fact are exceedingly strange. In January, 1747, a Mr. Slater informs the public of such a break-up of his domestic establishment, and cautions anyone against trusting his runaway wife. In a few days, however, his wife returned, and he appears to have repented of his conduct, for in February he says:—"Having advertised my Wife, Elizabeth Slater, for eloping from me, for which I own I am very sorry, she being return'd again, I do hereby promise to pay anyone that shall trust her for the future." Another lady rejoicing in a name to which she did little honour, and standing in "odorous" comparison with the famous wife of Ulysses, is thus advertised:—Feckingham, August 15, 1747.—Whereas my Wife, Penelope Pretty, hath lately eloped from me, without any just Cause or Reason whatsoever, and I am fearful she should run me in Debt, therefore I give this publick Notice to all Persons not to entrust her with any Goods whatsoever, I being resolved to pay no Debt she shall contract; and do hereby give Notice, that if she will return again, and behave as she ought to do, she shall be kindly received by me, Edward Pretty. As witness my Hand this 15th day of August, 1747.—EDWARD PRETTY." It is curious to notice that nearly all the husbands who advertised their wives were exceedingly anxious to receive them back again. Some even offer rewards to anyone who will inform them of their whereabouts. A Mr. Meredith having told the public of his loss, adds that "If any Persons will give Intelligence to the said William Meredith, where she may be met with, within seven

Days Time after the Date hereof, shall receive a Guinea Reward.—
N.B. She has but one Eye, and was well dress'd."

The most curious reward offered is contained in the following advertisement of June 16, 1749:—

Whereas, the Wife of Godfrey Wildsmith has elop'd from her said Husband without any Manner of Reason, and took some Things of Value with her. This is to forewarn any Person or Persons from trusting her, for he will pay no Debt she shall contract; and if any one will help her to him again, *they shall be well rewarded, and as little regarded, and shall have a Strike of Grains for their Pains of me,*

Godfrey Wildsmith.

The announcements of marriage are worth looking at. There is a passage in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" which is vividly recalled by these notices. *Evans, Shallow, and Slender* are talking of *Mistress Anne Page*, and the following interesting remarks are made:—

Shal. Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pounds?

Evans. Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.

Shal. I know the young gentlewoman: she has good gifts.

Evans. Seven hundred pounds, and possibilities, is goot gifts.

Our forefathers seem to have agreed with the good Welsh parson. On February 1, 1742, we read:—

Last Thursday, the Rev. Mr. Clemens, an eminent dissenting Teacher of Warwick, was married to Miss Molly Barnett, of the same Place, *a beautiful young Lady, with a great Fortune and fine Accomplishments.*

In May, 1743, this little paragraph appeared:—

Birmingham, May 16.—Yesterday Morning was married at Handsworth Church, Mr. Luckock, a Taylor of good Business of this Town, to Miss Loudon, who a few days ago came from London, an agreeable young Gentlewoman with a fortune of £1,000.

Our next happy bridegroom, however, met with much "petter gifts." A young lady with such a fortune must indeed have been of "great merit."

Birmingham, March 14.—On Monday last was married, at the Quaker's Meeting at Wigorn's Hall, near Castle Bromwich, Mr. Harfurd, an eminent Merchant of Bristol, to Miss Scanderett, of this Town, a young Lady of great Merit, with a Fortune of £10,000.

The next quotation is a police notice. It contains a very detailed and particular description of the culprit's dress, which may be taken to be the same as that worn by women of her class at the time. From the pen and ink portrait thus preserved we should say that Elizabeth Cresswell was a rather piquant and attractive girl. The notice appeared February 24, 1746.

This is to give Notice, That Elizabeth Cresswell, Daughter of Edward and Sarah Cresswell, of Great Wirley, in the Parish of Cannock, in the County of Stafford, did feloniously take eleven Shillings and Six-pence from her Master, William Simkin, of the Blakeless, in the Parish of Shashall, in the aforesaid County of Stafford, and did also pick a Work-woman's Pocket of three Shillings. N.B.—The said Elizabeth Cresswell is a lively good-looking Girl, of about seventeen or eighteen years of Age, a dark Eye, and low in Stature, and she wore a little Leghorn Hat (if not alter'd) unlined, tied with red Ribbands, and bowed very much about the crown with a red Ribband; and she had two Cotton Gowns, one a very narrow Strip upper bodied, with a narrow Strip of blue and white, the other a broad Strip of red, white and brown Colours. She had also two knitted Petticoats, the one blue, and the other red. Whoever can secure the above said Elizabeth Cresswell, so that she may be brought to Justice, shall receive Five Shillings Reward, and reasonable Charges, by me the abovesaid,

WILLIAM SIMKIN.

At this time other traders besides licensed victuallers had their signs. Some of the publicans' were rather peculiar. There were the Upper Round House, the Lower Round House, the Cock and Blue Breeches, and so on. But the custom now almost entirely confined to public houses was then the custom of other traders. In an advertisement of January 13, 1745, we find a jeweller has removed to the sign of the Hand and Ring—appropriately so called, we suppose, in allusion to the wedding-ring part of his business. Here is the announcement :—

This is to give Notice, That James Jackson, Jeweller, in Birmingham, is now removed to the Sign of the Hand and Ring in the High Street ; where Gentlemen and Ladies may be furnished with Variety of Jewelling Work in the newest Fashions, Funeral Rings of all sorts, also Chrystal Buttons, Seals, Rings, &c. Wholesale or Retale, at the lowest Prices.

The notions entertained of swift travelling by our forefathers are in striking contrast with our own. We now really “fly” to London in three hours ; it then took two days—and this speed was considered wonderful. The advertisements of “flying” coaches doing the journey in that time are numerous. One, however, will suffice. It should be added that they did not venture upon the journey in winter, the roads being almost impassable. In April, 1747, after the vehicle had been put up for that season, we are informed

The Birmingham and Warwick Stage Coach *Begins Flying* for the Summer Season in Two Days, on Tuesday, the 5th of May, and sets out every Tuesday Morning at Three o'clock, from the Swan Inn, in Birmingham, and from the George Inn in Aldersgate Street, London, every Friday Morning, and returns to Birmingham on Saturday. Performed by Robert Coles.

The following report of an execution is also characteristic of the time :—

Birmingham, Nov. 26.—Thomas Sidway, who was executed at Warwick last Week for Horse Stealing, immediately before the Time of his Execution, begg'd that he might be permitted to be in a Room by himself, to pray, which being granted him, he with a Razor that had been convey'd to him by one of his companions, cut his Throat ; but his Wind-pipe not being cut through, he was directly taken in a Cart to be executed, and was a considerable Time in dying.

Our next extract speaks well for the piety of the old town, and also for the care with which the inhabitants trained their children to be members of the Church of England :—" Birmingham, Nov. 10.—On Tuesday and Wednesday last, the Right Rev. Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, confirmed in the New Church in this Town, upwards of 2,200 Persons."

On August 12, 1751, the following most welcome bit of news appeared. We have cause to rejoice at the liberality which enabled a work so admirable to be carried out :—" On Wednesday a new peal of ten Bells, cast by Mr. Lister, of London, for the New Church, in this town, was rung for the first time, which proved very musical and gave a general satisfaction."

A notable house is mentioned in our next extract. The residence of Dr. Samuel Johnson at his friend's, Mr. Hector, in the Square, has made the place famous for evermore. The Shakspeare Club have done a good thing in placing a memorial tablet in front of this house—one of the very few which have a history worth reading. We think the number does not exceed half a dozen. The Old Crown House, Deritend ; Prince Rupert's house, at Camp Hill ; Dr. Priestley's in the Stratford Road ; Stratford House, and Mr. Hector's, almost complete the list. The first mention we find of Mr. Hector's house occurs on November 18, 1751.

Birmingham, Nov. 18.—On Wednesday last a Fire broke out in a Hayloft adjoining to Mr. Hector's House in the Square in this Town, occasion'd, as is supposed, by the Brewhouse Chimney, but by timely assistance it was immediately extinguished, without any other Damage than the loss of some of the Hay, and the breaking of a small Part of the Tiling.

As an illustration of the manners of the time the two following advertisements are unique. The readers of the day doubtless knew to whom these courteous quacks alluded. To us they are a riddle—a riddle which very few people will care to solve.

Tamworth, July 26. 1750.

Whereas T—— P——, of the Parish of S——, in the County of Stafford, Box Maker, has lately undertaken to cure Lunaticks or Madmen ; These are therefore to

satisfy the Publick, that he is an I——, a mere ignorant and illiterate Fellow, and undoubtedly must be incapable of relieving those Infirmities, or any else.

To the Printer.

S——y, Aug. 4, 1750.

Perusing your *Gazette* of the 30th past, I found an Advertisement from Tamworth, July 26, 1750; which invidiously mentions T—— P——, of the Parish of S——y, &c. This is therefore to satisfy the Publick, and my disingenuous Antagonist, supposed to be S—— P——, of B——n, the Cobbler, that if he is determined to enter into a Paper War, I doubt not but my Literature will be sufficient, not only to prove his Education mean, and his Ignorance in his Profession notoriously great, but also, to clear my Character of his undeserved, and therefore unjust Aspersions.

Robberies, and especially highway robberies, were of common occurrence in the olden times. The wretched state of the roads afforded great facilities for the "minions of the moon;" and they availed themselves of them with extraordinary boldness and daring. The stage coaches were frequently stopped, and the passengers were compelled to deliver their money and other valuables to the mounted plunderers, who gaily rode away with their spoil. Some of the incidents attending these adventures had a touch of romance about them; and very often men of a good position resorted to this practice to resuscitate their fortunes; Claude Duval was a hero of this stamp, and the minuet which he danced with a lady whom he had robbed has become famous in painting and story. He was a type of a considerable number of the knights of the road, but for the most part they were mere ruffians of the common order, and committed deeds of great daring. On many a lonely heath in England their gibbets gave the traveller a terrible reminder of the dangers to which he was exposed, and of the punishment which awaited the detected felon. There was little mercy in those days for the criminal, and in our Draconian law books, death was the punishment for almost every crime. Murder and petty larceny were alike visited with the gallows: and often at the same time and place some were hanged for the most fearful and cold-blooded acts, and others for having stolen five shillings, or for having made counterfeit coin. The law had no discrimination. The one fatal and irrevocable punishment awaited the man whose hands were red with the blood of many murders, and the poor soul who, to save her children from starving, had stolen a loaf. The records of highway robberies occur very frequently, and exhibit a state of things to which we have

now no parallel. One of the earliest notices in the *Gazette* is of such a robbery, and it affords us a very graphic idea of the kind of men who sought their fortunes on the road, and of the method they adopted. On October 18, 1742, the following report of a highway robbery is given :—

Last Week Mr. Frederick Bull, an eminent Tea Merchant in Cornhill, coming from Wolverhampton in Staffordshire to London, was overtaken on the Road by a single Man on Horseback, *whom he took for a Gentleman*; but after they had rode three or four miles together, he then ordered him to deliver, *which Mr. Bull took to be in Jest*; but he told him *that he was in Earnest*, and accordingly robb'd him of about four Guineas and his Watch, and afterwards rode with him three Miles, till they came near a Town, when the Highwayman rode off.

On December 6, in the same year, a report of a double robbery appears.

On Saturday, between Three and Four in the Afternoon, two Gentlemen and a Lady were robbed, between Dunchurch and Coventry, of about thirty Pounds, a Watch, and some Linen, by a single Highwayman. He was on a bald Horse, with two white Feet behind, and had a great Dog with him. The same Person stopped an old Man of between three and four score Years of Age, between Coventry and Asley, and robbed him of two Shillings, tho' he suffered himself to be knocked down three Times before he would deliver it.

The courage of the old man merited a better fate. The highwayman who committed these acts of violence seems to have been an industrious thief; for in the next week's paper we read of his doings again. On December 13, 1742, we are told—"Last Tuesday two Drovers were robb'd between the Black Dog and Ryeton, beyond Coventry, of twenty five Shillings, by the same Person who committed the Robbery mention'd in our last about the same place."

The next report of a highway robbery we have is of one committed on the Birmingham stage coach. In this instance it was followed by speedy retribution. The "noted Sansbury" suffered the full penalty of the law for his crimes..

Birmingham, May 20.—Last Saturday Morning about 5 o'clock, the Birmingham Stage-Coach was robb'd about two Miles from Banbury, and about an Hour after the Robbery was committed, the noted Sansbury and his Accomplice, who have infested those Roads were taken, being drunk, and asleep among the Standing Corn.

The ingenuity of rascaldom seems to have been as great in 1742 as in 1867; and if we are to judge by the frequency with which such cases appear, the opportunities to exercise their perverted wits were much more common. The following instance contains quite a little romance :—

Birmingham, May 22.—Amongst the Impostures that have been acted of late, perhaps as remarkable a one has been discovered as in any Part of the Kingdom. One George Page some little time since came to this town with a horse and chair, and took upon him the name of George Children, a gentleman's son at Ramhurst, in Kent. He soon found people credulous enough to believe him, and as he was a handsome young Fellow, he in a little Time ingratiated himself into the Affections of a young Lady, the Daughter of a neighbouring Clergyman, and, without any Knowledge of her Friends, married her. It was now thought high Time to enquire into the Gentleman's Pretensions, who, upon all Accounts proves to be a mere Impostor. Upon which he was taken into Custody, and carried before a Justice of the Peace, before whom he behaved with an uncommon boldness, and tho' confronted with plain Evidence, insisted upon his being the Man he pretended; nor would he give any Account where he had been for the last two Months, who owned the Horse he rode upon, or what had become of the Gold Watch he had received from the Lady? He was committed to Warwick Gaol, on suspicion of several Crimes, in order to take his Trial at the next Assizes. It happened that George Children, Esq., the Gentleman whom this Page pretended to be, died at the latter End of last Week, and it is said that there was so near a Resemblance between them, that Page had deceived Persons in the very Town were Mr. Children lived.

Soldiers were not always the protectors of the public peace. Sometimes they did a bit of robbery to vary the monotony of their daily life. In 1742 some of these guardians of our honour performed the following feat :—

On Thursday night last Mr. Palmer, of Ravenshaw, in the Parish of Solihull, going home from hence, was stopped between the Turnpike and Camp-Hill by three Foot Soldiers, who took from him about three Pounds and then made off. Diligent Search has been made, by Order of the Officers, who were out of their Quarters that Night, and some are taken up on Suspicion. We hear that a Reward of five Guineas is offered by Mr. Palmer to any of the three who shall discover his accomplices; and that any other Person who make the Discovery, will be entitled to the same Reward.

Crinoline in its present shape and make may be a modern invention, but steel hoops, having the same objectionable property of distending the skirts of dresses were then "quite the rage." Various advertisements of this period inform the ladies of that generation where "spring steel hoops, in the neatest fashion and at the lowest prices," are made and sold in Birmingham.

The following advertisement brings very forcibly to the mind the enormous changes which have taken place in the town since the time when clothes were placed to dry on a hedge in Snow Hill. The very words smack of the country, and call up pleasant pictures of hedges covered with spotless linen, with which every rambler is familiar. In the summer of 1750, however, this notice appeared in the *Gazette* :—

Lost, off a Hedge near the Machine on Snow Hill, Birmingham, on Monday, the 23rd of this Instant July, between Five and Six o'clock in the Evening, a Dresden Work'd White Waistcoat. Whoever will bring it to Mr. Lynch's, on Snow Hill, Birmingham, shall receive a reasonable Reward, and no questions asked. If pawn'd or sold the Money again with thanks.

The accomplishments required of servants in those days differed materially from those we seek now. Here is an advertisement for a housekeeper:—

A good House-keeper is wanted in a large Family: *She must understand Preserving of Sweetmeats and distilling of Simple Waters.*

Enquire further of the Printer of this paper.

N.B.—A good character will be expected.

There is something extremely characteristic of the highwaymen of this period in our next extract. The robber on the application of the robbed returns him six shillings, and then rides off, and resumes his avocation by robbing another unfortunate traveller in sight of his first victim. This curious incident occurred in September, 1750, and is thus reported in the *Gazette* on the first of that month:—

Birmingham, Oct. 1.—On Wednesday Mr. Henry Hunt, of this town, was stopped on Sutton Coldfield, in the Chester Road, by two Highwaymen, who robb'd him of his Watch and Money; *but on Mr. Hunt asking him to give him back some silver, the Highwayman return'd him six shillings*, and immediately rode across the Coldfield, and robb'd another gentleman in sight of him, and then rode quite off.

On the 1st of January, 1751, we read this unpleasant illustration of the perils of travellers.

On Thursday Night, about Six o'clock, a Bromsgrove Man was knocked off his Horse within Half a Mile of this Town by a Person on Horseback, as he was returning home; but on a Servant of the Rev. Mr. Boyse's immediately following him, the Person who knock'd him down, rode on.

Our last extract illustrative of "life on the road," is perhaps the most extraordinary bit of cool impudence and professional nonchalance ever exhibited by a thief. We read it now with admiration at the genius displayed by this artist, who was certainly not a "snapper up of unconsidered trifles." Coppers are beneath his dignity. He might have been a tradesman in distress, but the rejection of small coin is not in accordance with that character. And what a nice word that "collector" is for a thief. Really these old men of the road were a long way ahead of the perpetrators of vulgar crimes in our day. The coolness of his last request is also worthy of remark. The "men of three letters"

of that day knew how to perform their work with a gentlemanlike air that might almost pass for the real thing had they not been such scoundrels at bottom.

Birmingham, May 6.—On Tuesday last the Shrewsbury Carravan was stopp'd between the Four Crosses and the Welsh Harp by a single Highwayman, who behaved very civilly to the Passengers, told them that he was a Tradesman in Distress, and hoped that they would contribute to his assistance. On which each Passenger gave him something, to the Amount in the Whole, to about four Pounds, with which he was mighty well satisfied; *but return'd some Halfpence to one of them, saying he never took Copper.* He then told them there were two other Collectors on the Road, but he would see them out of Danger, which he accordingly did, and begged that they would not at their next Inn mention the Robbery nor appear against him if he should be taken up hereafter.

§ 7. THE BIRMINGHAM BOOK CLUB.

The most important literary event of this decade was the founding of the Birmingham Book Club—a Club which still exists in a green, vigorous, and flourishing old age. It is without doubt the oldest literary society in the town. Mr. Alderman E. C. Osborne is the Secretary, and the records in his possession reach as far back as 1775; but there is evidence that it had existed at least twenty-five years prior to that date. The previous minute books have been lost, but it is known that Mr. Foxall, Mr. Osborne's predecessor in the office, had documents which would warrant us in saying that the club was in existence in 1750. Such an old society is worth a section to itself; and all Birmingham men will be interested in learning something of its purpose and objects, and will be glad to know who were the men who more than a century ago helped to give a literary taste to the good old town. We are happily in a position to satisfy this laudable curiosity, and to give a satisfactory account, from the documents placed in our hands of the old Birmingham Book Club.

We think there can be little doubt but that at the first, and for some considerable time afterwards, the Club had a political as well as a literary purpose. It is manifest from the list of members that it was a liberal society; and when we remember the difficulties under which men met in that period to discuss the questions of the day, we shall not be surprised to find that, under the name of a book club, political

purposes were, although not ostensibly, really the chief objects of its founders. The list of members from 1775 to 1806 includes such well-known Birmingham names as Pemberton, Morgan, Belcher, Hasluck, Crompton, Parkes, Ashford, Ryland, Phipson, Messenger, Harrold, Clarke, Fellows, the well-known political poet Freeth, and others. Later in its history we find that James Luckock was the president; and we meet with the names of Fearon, Mathews, Dixon, Hutton, Whitfield, Amphlett, Drake, Wilmot and Beale. It is clear to our mind, that these names indicate the character of the Club. They were chiefly of the Unitarian persuasion, and some of their descendants still belong to that body, although others have used the right which they advocated, and have turned from the creed of their forefathers. The names given, however, show that the founders of the Club were among those who, along with Dr. Priestley, suffered so much for their opinions in the fatal year of the riots, 1791.

The Birmingham Library originated in 1779, and in 1780 Dr. Priestley undertook the "pastoral office," in New Meeting Street. In 1782 he organised the Library, and, according to Hutton, gave it "that stability and method without which no institution can prosper." Unfortunately, the early minutes of the Library and the lists of its earliest members are lost, but from other sources we are justified in assuming that many of the members of the Book Club were associated with the formation of the Library. The books purchased also prove that the Club sought by co-operation to procure books not generally accessible, and somewhat unpopular. Besides the magazines and reviews then existing, and a good sprinkling of novels and poetry, the principal works circulated among the members were those which advocated the views of what was then considered the extreme school of politics. While, in 1793 the effigy of Tom Paine was being carried in derision through the town, and afterwards consigned to the flames, the members of the Club were reading his books. At a later date Cobbett's works, the Memoirs of H. Hunt, Bamford's Poems, Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press, Pearce on the Abuses of the Laws, and Bentham's works, were pretty well circulated, and it is fair to suppose pretty well studied. These books as well as the list of members show the original character of the Club.

The Club in its early days, as now, had an annual dinner, after which the books not required for further circulation were sold. The earliest meetings of which we have any record were held at the Leicester Arms, Bell Street, known as the "Poet Freeth's Coffee House." The poet used to send out his invitations in verse, as became him. The first we have of these poetical dinner tickets is dated Birmingham, January 21, 1795, and is as follows:—

Society Feast, and Sale of Books on Friday next. Dinner at half-past one o'clock.

Sir,

As Food much in vogue, for the Keen, craving MIND,
The PRINTS though we daily peruse;
Till Peace is obtain'd, we may read ourselves blind,
Before we find SPECIAL good NEWS.
The Dutch, DAM'D or UNDAM'D, their ALL have at stake,
I pity our brave BRITISH BAND;
As soon, both for Trade and Humanity's sake,
May the OLIVE BRANCH gladden the Land.—J. FREETH.

In the next we have, for the year 1799, the dinner hour is changed to two o'clock, and the invitation is written in a more lilting measure:—

In these plentiful days,
If the heart is at ease,
And you've got a few minutes to spare,
With a friend and a cup,
Keep the old custom up,
And be happy o'er good English fare.
Be the times bad or good,
It is now understood,
That the CENTURY ends with this year,
May the next we begin
Be with Peace ushered in,
And its Blessings diffused far and near.
By reading we find
Constant food for the mind,
But as WAR we have cause to deplore;
As a TOAST whilst I live,
Free and fondly I'll give,
GOOD FELLOWSHIP, all the World o'er.

In 1800 the poet sends out the following invitation:—

Tho' dear as things are, o'er the sociable cup,
On FRIDAY attend—keep the old Charter up;
Howe'er some may prosper, whilst others are DISH'D,
The bulk of the people, 'tis ardently wished
Much LARGER will see, e'er three SIGNS the Sun passes,
Our SIXPENNY LOAVES, and our TWOPENNY CLASSES.

Till old Father Time ev'ry matter adjusts,
 The World will wag on—for it's AXIS ne'er rusts ;
 And since through the Kingdom, 'tis very well known,
 More MONEY will still be the MINISTER's tone ;
 Then let us at present drink Sorrow away,
 For no Man can live without moist'ning his Clay.

The next year, 1801, we have:—

Respecting mankind's old habitual fare,
 Whatever new modes are invented ;
 If WHITE BREAD I can't for my table prepare,
 I trust you'll with BROWN be contented.
 For support, on a generous public much lies,
 Wholesome Soup many keeps from starvation ;
 Good Ale very scarce is, and Christmas Mince-pies,
 It seems are almost out of fashion.
 On Russia, since England has got a strong claim,
 JOHN BULL—as to there a short dance is—
 May serve the magnanimous PAUL much the same
 As the French serve the Emperor FRANCIS.
 Although common food is uncommonly dear,
 Endeavour to make the heart gay ;
 And let at the Board, over plain English cheer,
 BETTER TIMES be the Toast of the Day.

The bad effects of the war, and the intense desire for peace, bringing the mind back to those sad and fearful times, are the staple of these prandial effusions. The one for 1802 alludes to the custom of the Club, the wish for peace, and the sale of the books. It reads as follows:—

THO' most Things are grievously dear,
 Whatever the Seasons impart ;
 Our Charter is—once in the Year,
 To meet and make merry the Heart.
 Suspense hangs on every mind,
 Such a stand-still in Trade ne'er was known ;
 Till PEACE is effectually sign'd,
 No good 'tis much fear'd can be done.
 Expectation has long been afloat,
 For News, hence to chase away Sorrow ;
 Each Day one or other cries out,
 “ I hope we shall see it To-morrow.”
 Due regard let the HAMMER be paid,
 Ply the glass gloomy care to dispel ;
 If mellow our Hearts are all made,
 The BOOKS much better may sell.

The latest of Freeth's invitations which has come into our hands is the one for the Annual Dinner, 1803. The writer was then in his 73rd year. He died on the 29th of September, 1808, aged 77. The peace he and the nation so much desired, and which proved of such a short duration, had been signed at Amiens in 1802. Accordingly the poet's note is changed a little, and he concludes his invitation by proposing the popular toast of the day—

Tho' much *blood* and treasure the war must have cost,
Bloody angry are they who their *places* have lost ;
 And tho' thrown aside is the sword and the gun,
 As a war upon paper is still going on,
 What a happiness 'twill to posterity be,
 If our sons, and our sons' sons, no other war see !
 By woeful experience, since England well knows
 That Europe but seldom finds general repose ;
 Let the toast of the day—wishing trade may increase,
 Be " FRIENDSHIP AND ADDINGTON, PLENTY AND PEACE."

It appears to have been the habit of the old bard to have used similar invitations whenever there was to be a dinner at his house. We have one on a "Coming of age," which, although it has no reference to the Book Club, we may be excused for quoting here. He selects for a motto the two lines of Gay—

Life is a Jest, and all Things show it ;
 I thought so once, but now I know it.

On which the aged rhymester thus moralises :—

On cool reflection, so said GAY,
 When Life was almost worn away ;
 Yet had he gaily been inclin'd,
 He might have alter'd much his mind ;
 But what the Poet stiles a Jest,
 To some may oddly seem exprest ;
 For as a Jest, whoe'er may take it,
 Many a serious Matter make it.
 A BRANDY-DRINKER t'other Day,
 One Hundred Years who'd wet his Clay,
 Dropt from the PERCH, but not before
 He Gallons drank a Hundred Score.
 At *threescore years and ten* a Man
 Must think his Days a decent Span,
 And if the World is all a Jest,
 Of *precious* Minutes make the best.

Our genial poet thus invites his friends to a Shrove-Tuesday feast:—

COME and take at my table a seat,
 (Tho' granting the times may be bad,)
 Now and then a good Dinner I get,
 And my share of good ale I have had.
 Complaining would be a mere folly;
 I ne'er had the GRAVEL nor GOUT;
 SHROVE TUESDAY's the time to be jolly,
 So pass the glass briskly about.
 Impatient the people are grown
 For news—all suspense to dispel;
 At AMIENS the work's nearly done,
 In AMITY long may we dwell.
 Animosities hence done away,
 Bright Commerce enliv'ning the shore,
 Let this be the TOAST of the day,
 "GOOD FELLOWSHIP all the world o'er."

The last card in our possession summons the guests to a Society Feast, and alludes to a terrible time indeed. The date is November 27, 1799. It is as follows—

WHEN SIXPENNY LOAVES but two pounders appear,
 Strange murmurs are sure to be heard everywhere;
 Long remembered 'twill be—let who will draw the line,
 How eccentric things run through the Year Ninety-nine;
 Out of joint are the Seasons—and wond'rous to say!
 MAY look'd like NOVEMBER—NOVEMBER like MAY.

But Sadness be banish'd—o'er good English cheer
 Let's strive to be happy, through Life as we steer.

Whate'er on the War PRO or CON may be said,
 As most people think Blood enough has been shed,
 Should a Truce be brought forward—how happy to find it—
 A Peace I presume would not long be behind it;
 Which BLESSING, when certain to be near at hand,
 Will Pleasure uncommon! spread over the LAND.

And thus the Birmingham Book Club has the honour of being the oldest literary society in the town, and of having had "Freeth the Poet" for one of its earliest members.

CHAPTER II.—1751-1761.

§ I. APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

THE changes made in the aspect of the town were, until the last fifty years, of very slow growth. Our forefathers were a steady-going, plodding, and contented race. Novelty had no especial charms for them. They liked the old ways, the old streets, the old houses, and the old habits. "Better bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of," seems to have been the sentiment which they tacitly adopted. They were tolerably well-to-do, and had the same trust in the Government which for so many years made the people of Birmingham such earnest and devoted Church-and-King men. As if they wished to atone for the part they had taken in resisting Charles I., and in siding with the Parliament, they were in the reigns of the Georges, and especially in that of the third of that name, as violent and uncompromising Tories as could be found in England. The town grew in extent and population quietly and soberly, and industry made an equally quiet and sober progress until the days of Boulton and Watt revolutionised the trade of the country. Thus we need not be surprised at the evidences we meet of the length of time it took Birmingham to grow out of a quiet, pretty country town to the large hive of industry which it is now. Writing of the Birmingham of Charles the Second's days, Macaulay says: "Birmingham had not been thought of sufficient importance to send a member to Oliver's Parliament. Yet the manufacturers of Birmingham were already a busy and thriving race. They boasted that their hardware was highly esteemed, not indeed as now, at Pekin and Lima, at Bokhara and Timbuctoo, but in London, and even as far off as Ireland. They had acquired a less honourable renown as coiners of bad money. In allusion to their spurious groats, the Tory part had fixed on demagogues who hypocritically affected zeal

against Popery, the nickname of 'Birminghams.' Yet in 1685, the population, which is now* little less than two hundred thousand, did not amount to four thousand. Birmingham buttons were just beginning to be known: of Birmingham guns nobody had yet heard; and the place whence two generations after, the magnificent editions of Baskerville went forth to astonish all the librarians of Europe, did not contain a single regular shop where a Bible or an almanack could be bought. On market days a bookseller named Michael Johnson, the father of the great Samuel Johnson, came over from Lichfield, and opened a stall during a few hours. This supply of literature was found adequate to the demand." Our readers will be able to note the changes which have taken place from the time when this picture was a true one, to the year 1752—the period at which our narrative has now arrived.

The following advertisement, which appears January 6, 1752, is a good illustration of the part then called the Market Place:—

To be Lett and entered upon at Lady-Day next A very good Public House, known by the name of the lower Round about House, with a Stable that will hold ten Horses, and a Pump of soft Water in the Brewhouse, situate in the Market Place in Birmingham. It has Butcher's Stalls all round it. Enquire of Mrs. Billingsley, at Mr. Joseph Richardson's Salesman, in Birmingham.

Here is another which appeared in March of the same year:—

To be Sold. The Dwelling-House of the late Francis Boswell, *pleasantly situated, with a Croft and large Garden, near Key Hill, at Hockley, within about a Mile of Birmingham.* For farther Particulars, enquire of Mr. John or William Young, living in Mr. Jeffery's Yard, in Digbeth, Birmingham.

In the same month we read of such a house as this being to let in Dale End:—

To be Lett, in Dale End, next Door to Mr. Greatrex's, Birmingham, *a House with a Garden*, two large lower Rooms, and five large upper Rooms, Shops, Brewhouse, Cellar, and other Conveniences. Enquire of Mr. Swift, Baker, near the Castle Inn, in Birmingham aforesaid.

The houses in Bull Street were also adorned with gardens, for in July 13, 1752, we find this advertisement:—

To be Sold together, a Freehold House and Garden, situate in Bull Street, in Birmingham, in the occupation of Mrs. Banner; and two Leasehold Houses adjoining, with Land seventy yards deep, in the Occupation of Mr. Hidson, and Mr. Laughier. For further particulars, enquire of Mr. Thomas Ashwell, in Bull Street, Birmingham.

* This was published in 1840.

On December 11, of the same year, we read:—

To be Sold, a *Freehold Croft, or Piece of Land to build upon*, with a Messuage standing thereon, situate near the New Chapel in Birmingham. For further Particulars, enquire of Mr. Thomas Fisher, Attorney at Law in Birmingham.

The advertisements of 1753-4, relating to houses situated in different parts of the town are similar to those previously quoted. We select a few of these, giving the dates at which they appeared:—

Jan. 8, 1753.—To be Lett, situate in Birmingham, for Ninety-nine Years, or a shorter Term, at Holloway Head. About two Acres of Land, with a Messuage, and good soft Water. Also near the Lower End of Lichfield Street, a large convenient House *with a good Garden, with or without a great Quantity of Warehouses and Shopping, and two Acres of Land adjoining, with good Springs of Water for the Use of some Trades*. Enquire of Joseph Rann, or John Rann.

Jan. 15, 1753.—To be Sold, the Remainder of a Lease of a Parcel of Land situate on each Side of the Foot Way leading from Birmingham towards Duddeston Hall, *most part whereof is converted into small Pleasure Gardens*, and well tenanted: in which Lease 26 years are to come from the 23rd Day of March next, O.S. For further particulars, enquire of Mr. George Pickerill, Gardener, in Moor Street: or of Mr. John Hand, Attorney, in Ann Street, in Birmingham aforesaid.

April 16, 1753.—To be Lett and entered upon at Midsummer next. A Large commodious new-built House, containing four Rooms upon a Floor, with a good Stable, Garden, &c. all entire, situate at the upper End of Moor Street in Birmingham, now in the Tenure or Occupation of Mr. William Brooks, Attorney.

June 4, 1753.—To be Lett and entered upon immediately. A Good new-built double House, situate in Mount Pleasant or Anne Street, near the New Church Birmingham, with a sash to the Front, convenient for Shopkeeping, a good Workshop, Brew-house, and a large Oven well-accustomed for Baking, *a large Garden, and other conveniences*.

July 2nd, 1753.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, A New-built House, situated at the Upper End of Snow Hill, Birmingham, with two Rooms on a Floor, a Pump, Garden, and other good Conveniences. Enquire of Thomas Westley, Glazier, in Bull Street, Birmingham.

April 8, 1754.—To be Lett, Two well-finished commodious Houses, with a Private Yard, good Brewhouse, Garden, and Stable to each, situated at Holloway Head, in Birmingham. N.B. If any more Building is wanted, it shall be done to the tenant's satisfaction. Enquire of Anthony Spicer, Carpenter, at Mount Pleasant, in Birmingham.

To be Lett, Together or Separate, A Very good New House and Malt-house with *Stable, Garden, and other Conveniences, all enclosed with a Brick Wall, situate in Coleshill Street, Birmingham*. Enquire of Francis Gill, near the White Horse in Moor Street. N.B.—The House would suit any Person that takes in Boarders or keeps a School.

The first mention we find made of New Hall occurs in the following advertisement, which appeared in February, 1754. The reader will notice that although situated in the street now called New Hall Street, it is said to be "near Birmingham."

To be Lett, Part of New Hall, near Birmingham, containing a House of three Rooms on a Floor, with a Brewhouse, Stable, and a well-planted Garden, and with or without some Land. Enquire at New Hall aforesaid, or of the Printer of this Paper.

On January 10, 1757, the following advertisement appears :—

To be Lett, Together or in two Tenements, and entered upon immediately if required, A New double genteel and pleasant Dwelling House, being situated and fronting the East End of the New Chapel,* Birmingham, with Four Rooms on a Floor, Cellars, &c., &c., *a Garden*, and a very convenient and large Brewhouse, Outhouses, and other necessary Appurtenances thereto adjoining, together with a large Warehouse, suitable for any Business, all *quite entirely* new, in the Occupation of John Perry, Gimblett-Maker, of whom the farther necessary particulars may be had.

A garden continues to appear in these advertisements of houses to be let in whatever part of the town they are situated. On May 30, 1757, we have one thus described in Digbeth :—

To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, A Very good Dwelling-House, with a large and well-accustom'd Baker's Shop to the Front, with a very good Bakehouse, and all other convenient buildings for a Baker, with *a good Garden*, &c., situate a little below the White Hart in Digbeth, Birmingham. Further Particulars enquire of Mr. William Dutton, at Mrs. Blackham's in Edgbaston-Street; or Mr. Stewart, Attorney at Law in Wolverhampton.

On June 21, of the same year, an advertisement informs us that there is for sale "A Freehold House in the Great Bull Ring in Birmingham, adjoining to the Passage leading into the Old Church Yard now in the holding of Mr. John Mears." This announcement takes us back to the time when the Old Church was surrounded by shops. These shops existed within the memory of persons still living. With those now in St. Martin's Lane they formed a kind of square, in the middle of which was situated the Parish Church. The appearance in old prints is very curious. The thoroughfare in Spiceal Street on the one side, and the Bull Ring on the other was thus made very narrow, and their removal about the year 1806 was a great improvement to this part of the town.

Weaman Street would not be considered now as a very pleasant part of the town; but in the year 1757 it was a very different place. On July 4, in that year, we learn something about it which affords a standard for comparison.

* St. Bartholomew's.

Register Office,

Birmingham, June 27, 1757.

To be Lett and enter'd upon immediately a large substantial House, the Bottom of Weaman-Street, airy, and *very pleasantly situated*; consisting of a large Kitchen, Parlour, and Pantry, four Chambers on the first floor, and three Garrets, all handsomely parged,* and most of them with Fire-places in; very good cellaring, with Warehouse, Brewhouse, and Good Shopping to employ 40 pair of Hands; *a large Garden, a good Well* and other Conveniences &c.

In September, "a House, Shop and Garden near the Welsh Cross," are advertised; and on February 27, 1758, "The uppermost House in Lichfield-Street, next the Square, Birmingham, *pleasantly situated*, three Rooms on a Floor, with a Brewhouse and Room over it, a Well and Back Yard all entire." The next, which occurs on March 27, 1758, recalls a pleasant picture. The house is in Park Street, "*pleasantly situated to the Meadows*;" and in the old maps there the meadows are, while now—but we all know what is there now, and gladly turn to the past, read the advertisement, and seek by the aid of a vivid imagination to restore the picture:—

To be Lett, in Squire's-Court, Park Street, Birmingham, a very good House, *pleasantly situated to the Meadows*, with a good Kitchen, Parlour and Pantry, three Chambers, three Garrets, with Closets, Water Plenty, and any other Conveniency that shall be wanted.

We had then the Great Bull Ring and the Little Bull Ring. We have recently quoted an advertisement in which the first was given; the next, May 7, 1759, gives us the second:—

To be Lett, and entered upon at Midsummer, The Lower Round-about House, being a large, convenient, and well-accustomed Publick House, situate in the Little Bull Ring, Birmingham.

Another advertisement of the same year gives us a different notion of Walmer Lane, now Lancaster Street, to that obtained by a walk down it at the present time.

To be Let to the best bidder, at Charles Freeth's Coffee House in Bell Street, Birmingham; on Tuesday the 13th Day of February, between Two and Four o'Clock, about *five Acres of Pasture Land, in Walmer Lane, near Birmingham*, now in the Occupation of Mr. William Priest, Attorney at Law, and to be enter'd on at Lady-Day next.—For further Particulars enquire of Mr. Jos. May, in Moor Street.

The year 1759 was remarkable for the impetus given to building. The newspapers of that date afford us no information as to the cause of this. In the barest manner, introduced by an *on dit* the fact is

* Plastered with a pattern; the word is now obsolete.

recorded, and nothing more. The writer is evidently under the impression that "brevity is the soul of wit," and measured by this old proverb he deserves to be called the wittiest of mortals. Here is the record :—
 "Tis said there are more new Buildings now carrying on in this Town than have been for many years past, and that more are contracted for, that only wait for Hands to execute, which at this Time are very much wanted." He seems altogether unconscious of the great changes in the town which this statement foreshadows. On January 7, 1760, this advertisement appeared :—

To be Sold, an handsome well-built Dwelling House, with several Shops, and other Out-buildings; *also a good Garden, and about a Quarter of an Acre of Land*, with the Appurtenances, situate in Aston Street, Birmingham, in the occupation of Mr. John Simmonds, subject to a Ground Rent of 7*l.* per Annum.

But all that we have extracted from this decade must give place to the one we are about to quote. It is something delightful to think that only a century back such things were. On June 23, 1760, was announced :—

To be Sold, under a Commission of Bankrupt, for so many Years of a Term of 90 Years (86 of which are to come) as shall occur during the natural Life of Joseph Richards, a Bankrupt, with a valuable contingent Interest therein, an *handsome Messuage, with commodious Out Buildings, Gardens, planted with the choicest of Wall and other Fruit-Trees, and about 19 Acres of Land adjoining, delightfully situated on the Hill,* in the Parish of St. Martin in Birmingham*; and Three Messuages and Nine Dwelling-Houses, in and by the Side of the Town, all of which are new Buildings (held under the said Lease) and are of the clear Yearly Rents and Value of 186*l.* For further Particulars enquire of Mr. Edmund Hector, or Mr. John Turner, Assignees of the Estate and Effects of the said Bankrupt; or of Mr. Richard Woodward, Attorney, all of Birmingham aforesaid.

The year 1761 opens with this announcement :—

January 19, 1761.

To be Sold to the best Bidder, this Day between the Hours of Two and Four in the Afternoon, at the Swan Inn, in Birmingham, a Messuage or Tenement, with a good open Cellar under the same, fronting to the Great Bull Ring, in Birmingham, the next House but one below the Dolphin Inn, now in the Tenure or Occupation of William Townsend, Saddler: Also another Messuage or Tenement, standing in the Yard or Backside behind the said Front House, late in the Tenure of Mr. John Wall, with two other Messuages or Tenements, a very large and commodious Malt House, two Stables, Pigsty, and Garden, situate also in the said Yard or Backside; which said Building and Premises

* The Hill now occupied by Easy Row, part of Suffolk Street, and the end of Broad Street was at this time considered, and was a beautiful suburb of the Town. Baskerville's famous house and still more famous printing office were situated here. The house still stands in the same place; but how changed are all the surroundings,

are adjoining together, all Freehold, and of the yearly Value of upwards of 50*l*.—For Particulars enquire of Mr. Thomas Steward, Attorney, or of Mr. Richard Hicks, in Birmingham aforesaid.

The following notice reveals a curious state of things as respects the condition of Digbeth; it also shows the willingness of those in office to remedy an evil when pointed out. It is dated April 6, 1761.

Whereas Digbeth Street* in this Town has been often represented to the Trustees of Lench's Lands as very dangerous to travel through on Horseback, or otherwise, and that if there was a Land† made in the middle of the said Street, it would be much more safe, and of publick Utility, not only to the Inhabitants of this Town, but to all others, who shall have Occasion to travel through the same; and as several persons have already offered to subscribe to this great and useful Undertaking; this is therefore to acquaint the Public that as soon as a sum of Money shall be raised proper to begin such an Undertaking, that the said Trustees are willing to do all in their Power to compleat it, not leaving undone such other things as they are bound to do under their Trust. Robert Moore, Bailiff of the said Trust.

On July 20, 1761, there was announced

To be Lett, and entered upon at Michaelmas Next, a House in the Upper Part of Dale End, Birmingham, now in the occupation of John Cambden, Baker, with all the Utensils belonging to his Trade; the House consists of 4 Rooms on a Floor, with an entire *Yard, Stable, Garden*, a Pump with Soft Water, a Quantity of Back Building fit for a Person in a Mercantile Way or a large Manufacturer. Enquire on the Premises.

These advertisements, selected from a very large number of the like kind, show that the appearance of Birmingham was very slowly changing. It was still a small town in the midst of the country. Gardens were attached to most of the houses in almost every part of it. The streets, in which at the present time there is scarcely breathing room for a sickly looking tree, or a yellow-leaved flowering plant, were then rich with fruits and flowers, and men standing at Highgate could look over a town whose houses were for the most part set in the midst of lovely and well-cultivated gardens. Slowly at first, and by steps which we shall be able to trace, the town encroached upon the country, and the Birmingham of a century ago grew into the Birmingham of to-day.

* It is very rarely that the word "street" is added to Digbeth, and this extract is rendered more curious on that account.

† This means, if a proper horse-road were made, which evidently did not exist at this date.

§ 2. PUBLIC LIFE.

There are not many more public events to record during this decade than in the previous one. The people appear for the most part to have been contented with shouting at royal birthdays; with drinking success to Frederick the Great; with having fireworks and illuminations on the occasion of victories; with creating a disturbance when corn was dear, and in indulging in their favourite pastime—cock-fighting. Attention was, however, paid to the poor, and in 1752 we read that the weighing machine was bought by the Overseers, and that the profit was to be devoted to the relief of the poor, and the diminution of the poor-rate, or the poor levy as it was then called. The announcements of this sale was made on January 20 :—

Whereas the Proprietors of the Upper Machine for Weighing of Carriages, in the Town of Birmingham, have disposed of the same for the Benefit of the Poor of the said Town : This is to give Notice, that if any Person or Persons indebted to the said Machine, neglect to pay their respective Debt or Debts, to Mr. Thomas Cecill, Attorney in Birmingham, within the Space of six Weeks now next ensuing, they will be proceeded against according to Law for Recovery of the same, without further Notice.

And on February 17, the Overseers issued the following Notice :—

Birmingham, Feb. 17, 1752.

Notice is hereby given That the Machine for Weighing Coal (known by the Name of the Town Machine,) is the only Engine now standing for that purpose; the other Machine being purchased by the Overseers of the Poor and will be taken down. That the Town Machine may answer the Design of its first Institution in as ample a Manner as possible, every House-keeper therefore will receive an Advantage by encouraging this Machine, since the Poor's Levy will annually be reduced in proportion to the Profits arising from it; and in order to prevent the deceitful practices of Coal-Heavers, it is determined to reduce their Number to Twelve; that they shall be Men of known Characters, and be distinguished by a Brass Badge, number'd, and bearing the Letters T. M., but upon any illicit Practice, they shall be deprived of their Badges and Employment, and their Places filled up by the Nomination of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor. And, in order to suppress the Imposition which Purchasers have frequently suffer'd from a large Bottom of small Coal, it is determined that no Payment shall be made for any Coal under one Pound Weight, but all such shall be measured by the Coal-Heaver attending (who will be provided with a Bushel for that Purpose), and for every such Measure, Half a Hundred shall be deducted from the Load; but instead of Half a Hundred in each Ton for Draught, only One Quarter of a Hundred will be allowed.

N.B.—The Coal-Heavers will appear in their Badges on Monday, the 24th instant. All complaints to be exhibited at the Workhouse, before the Overseers of the Poor, on Friday in the Afternoon.

In this year the Governors of the Free Grammar School made an effort to extend the education given by that admirable foundation. On April 6, 1752, they made this announcement :—

Whereas the Governors of the Free Grammar School in Birmingham in Pursuance of certain Statutes and Orders by them lately made for setting up English Schools in different Parts of the said Town, have appointed William Latham, in Dudley Street, Thomas Wilson, near the Old Cross, Mary Ankers, Wife of Noel Ankers, in Free-man Street, and the Widow Austin, in London 'Prentice Street, to be the first Masters and Mistresses for teaching such and so many Boys and Girls to learn the English Language Gratis, as shall for that Purpose be appointed, and sent to them from Time to Time by the said Governors, or the major Part of them. This Public Notice is therefore given, that such Inhabitants of the said Town, as are esteem'd proper Objects to have the Benefit of the said Charity, may forthwith apply to the said Governors on the Behalf of such Children as are intended to be sent to those Schools.

The first notice, of what we suppose is by far the oldest Club in Birmingham, appears June 22, 1752. Thus, for more than a century and a quarter the famous Bean Club has changed neither in name nor politics—

Notice is hereby given, That the Anniversary Feast of the Bean Club, will be held at the Swan in Birmingham, on Friday the 17th Day of July next, when the Members of the said Club are desired to give their Attendance. N.B. Dinner will be on the Table at one.

In January the following strange advertisement appears :—

This is to give Notice That at the Pin Warehouse in Corbett's Alley, in the High Street, Birmingham, are to be sold *Joseph Allen's best London Pins, as good as are procured by any of the Trade, and as cheap as in London*, by John Allen, Peruke-Maker.

Was it, then, the practice, as we understand it is at present with many manufacturers, to make things in Birmingham, and then, in order to increase their attraction in the eyes of purchasers, to advertise them as London goods? If so, some of our peculiarities of trade may at least plead antiquity for their justification.

In consequence of the change made in the Calendar this year Onion Fair had to be postponed from Michaelmas Day to October 10. Of this alteration the following notice was published in September :—

This is to give Notice, that Birmingham Fair, which usually was kept on Michaelmas Day, will be held on the 10th day of October, New Style, pursuant to the late Act of Parliament.

THOMAS TURNER, High Bailiff.

Occasionally a paragraph is to be met with which shows that some one more far-seeing or patriotic than his fellows is not quite satisfied with letting things take their course. Thus in 1753 the bad state of the roads appears to have attracted some attention, for on the first day of the year some one asks this pertinent question:—

Would it not be a great Inducement to a generous Contribution for opening the Roads from Birmingham to Aston, and from Birmingham to Sortley,* if Estimates were taken of the Expense that will attend putting them in good Condition; and proper Persons chose to receive the Sums subscribed to each Road; as the Inhabitants would then be convinced there is a Probability of Raising a sufficient Fund and of having it impartially Expended.

The next extract records an event in the history of the old and famous Bean Club, which its present members will read with interest:—

Birmingham, August 6.—On Monday last, at the Anniversary Meeting of the Bean Club at the Swan, a Proposal being made for beginning a Subscription to erect an Altar Piece in the New Chapel in this Town, Lord Fielding generously gave the whole Sum, being £120., the Estimate of a Design given in by Mess. W. and D. Hiorn, which is to be executed with all Expedition.

At this time the Bean Club met on the first Thursday in every month; at present the members only assemble once a year. In October, 1753, the town was visited by the great preacher, Mr. Whitfield. Let us hope that the “great number of people” who went to listen to him were attracted by something more than “curiosity,” and that if “they went to scoff they remained to pray.”

The End of last Week Mr. Whitfield came to this Town, and yesterday on a large waste Piece of Ground he preached to a very great Number of People, which were collected together by Curiosity.

An extract relating to 1754 tells us of a public grievance, and also tells us that public spirit was as easily roused against taxes in those days as in our own. We have sought in vain for the result, if any, which followed this invitation to the inhabitants:—

December 23, 1754.—The Inhabitants of Birmingham are desired to meet upon Friday, the 27th Day of December Instant, at Three o'clock in the Afternoon, at the Widow Packwood's in the Cherry Orchard, to consider whether it may not be proper to apply to Parliament for a Redress of the Grievances complained of by the restraint put upon the Wheel Carriages.

There is a fearful history in the next brief statement. On May 24, 1756, we read “On Friday War was declared against France at Lich-

* Now called Saltley.

field, on Saturday at Warwick, Worcester and Tamworth; and this day it will be declared in this Town." As a fitting corollary to this we find in July of the same year the people engaged in a display of public spirit not quite unknown in our time. We can only say of such customs that they are more honoured in the breach than the observance. In this pleasant month, 1756, "an Effigy, said to be that of an Admiral,* was burnt in the Publick Market here, with an inscription on it signifying that Acts of Cowardice in those who are esteem'd their Country's Defenders, should always be in that manner treated."

The people burned the effigy of the unfortunate admiral, but they kept the king's birthday with enthusiasm. It was observed here says our chronicle with "Ringing of Bells, and other Demonstrations of Loyalty; and in the Evening were Bonfires and a great Variety of Fireworks, in one of which were formed the following lines:—

BRITONS, awake!
Your Sovereign's Foes subdue:
Reward the Brave,
And give each Knave his Due!"

Bonfires, illuminations, and even the burning of effigies were in vain to lessen the fearful distress which the people suffered at this time. Corn was being sold at famine prices, and the rage of the nation was turned against the farmers, millers, and corn-factors. There were riots in almost all the neighbouring towns. At Kidderminster "the poor manufacturing people being half-starved through the excessive Price of Corn, &c., assembled at Market Time, and committed great Outrages among the Farmers and Millers; and on Monday a numerous Mob of Men and Women travers'd the Market at Evesham in a tumultuous Manner, which prevented the Corn-Factors appearing in the Market, or even in any of the Streets, the whole day."

At Walsall, Droitwich, and in fact all over the country the people assembled in large numbers, and a general rising was anticipated. There is not, however, a single statement made as to the conduct of the people of Birmingham under this terrible infliction; it is therefore fair to presume that it was peaceful and orderly; and that their industry carried them through this, as it has since carried them through so many crises, almost unscathed. On November 28, "there was a great Council at the Cockpit, on the affair of settling the Price of Corn, at which the Lord

* This was Admiral Byng. In May, 1756, he made a feeble attack on the French Fleet before Minorca. He was tried for cowardice, condemned, and was most unjustly executed on March 14, 1757.

Mayor, and several Merchants of London, Liverpool, Bristol, &c., attended." The Privy Council took the matter up, and on December 4, "a Proclamation was published for putting the Laws in speedy and effectual Execution against Forestalling, Regrating, and Engrossing of Corn."

Little good appears to have resulted from this proclamation, the distress continued and the sufferings of the people were very great. The evils which legislation could not cure, the generosity of some of the wealthy served to alleviate; and it is pleasant to read of the efforts of many of our noblemen and gentlemen to decrease the distress. Lord Dartmouth was eminent for the extent of his charity. On February 21, 1757, we read:—

The number of people that his Lordship relieves weekly at West-Bromwich is near 300; three Days a week a good Wheat Bread is given away at the Hall, when each Person has a Loaf that weighs six Pounds, and twice a Week Beef, Broth, and Bread, are distributed to near 200 Persons at a Tenant's of his Lordship's; besides which large Quantities of Wheat and Barley are constantly bought to be sold at a low Rate; and several in the Neighbourhood are relieved in a private Manner with Necessaries, to make their Lives comfortable. His Lordship hath placed out to School thirty Boys, and twenty Girls, (whom he hath clothed in an Uniform, and provides with Books) to be taught to read and write, and the Girls also to knit and sew.

At Bridgnorth, Sir Richard Acton, Bart., was especially active in his benevolence. "We hear," says the *Gazette*, "that the Poor of four Parishes in the Neighbourhood of Envil are relieved by the Right Hon. the Earl of Stamford, to whom Bread is weekly distributed, and at the same time eighteen Pence given to each Person." The price of bread made of the best wheat was fixed to be sold at sixpence the quartern loaf; but with a land-tax of four shillings in the pound and one of the same amount on all salaries and premiums, it would have been vain to have hoped for returning prosperity.

In 1757 our manufacturers made a step in advance of free-trade. Here is the proof:—

This is to acquaint the Iron Manufacturers and others, that there is opened at Mr. Whinnick's, at the Swan in Birmingham, a Subscription for presenting a Petition to Parliament for the Importation of Bar Iron from America, Duty free, to all the Ports of England; and that a general Meeting of the Subscribers will be at the said Swan on Thursday next at Two o'Clock.

In this year the Sabbatarians of the town made the following announcement. There is no signature to the notice, and we are, therefore, not able to say whether it emanated from the authorities or not.

Birmingham. August 20th. 1757.

As there are many excellent Laws relating to a religious Observation of the Sabbath, it is determined to put the said Laws in Execution, against those who shall for the future be found guilty of buying, selling, or exposing for Sale, any Goods, Wares, or any Sort of Merchandize whatsoever; and also against all those who shall be found Guilty of following their several Occupations, in any Respect on that Day, contrary to the several Statutes in such Cases made and provided.

The two following extracts afford some very interesting and curious information. They also show that complaints of the increase and expense of the poor were not unknown in the "good old times."

Birmingham, December 12.

The great Expence that attends the support of the Poor of this Town, which in the Time of the last Overseers amounted to near *Four Thousand Pounds*, has occasioned an enquiry into the Number of Housekeepers that do not pay towards such support; and it appears, on examination, that upwards of *Two Thousand* do not pay to the Poor's Levy; by which means the Levies fall so heavy on those that do pay, that if the yearly expence should continue to increase as it has done for some years past very bad consequences must ensue; to provide against which is highly worthy of Consideration; and it is thought that the most likely Method to be taken, would be to fix the charge of the Poor on the Houses, to be paid by the Landlords; the good effects of which have already been found by St. Luke's Parish in London, for which Purpose an Act of Parliament was obtained.

Birmingham, December 19.

To obviate any Objections that may be made to the Number of Houses, mentioned in our last, that do not pay to the Poor's Levy of this Town, the following exact Numbers of the Houses that are assess'd and not assess'd, in each Overseer's Collection, are given; but many of the Houses that are assessed do not pay.

		Houses Assessed.		Not Assessed.
Edgbaston Street	Collection	289	.....	433
New Street	ditto	384	.....	196
Digbeth	ditto	275	.....	348
Bull Street	ditto	378	.....	386
Middle Town	ditto	303	.....	134
Dale End	ditto	329	.....	497
		1958		1994

The King of Prussia was a great favourite in this town. His victories and his birth-days were celebrated with bell-ringsings, illuminations, and bonfires. Thus on May 23, 1757, we read:—

Yesterday the Bells of this Town were immediately set to ringing on the receipt of the Confirmation of the Victory obtained over the Austrians by the King of Prussia, and the greatest joy was by every Body express'd on the Occasion.

At a later date we have this long paragraph narrating the Birmingham celebration of the great Frederick's birthday. The enthusiasm of one gentleman, it will be seen, blossomed into rhyme on the occasion.

Birmingham, January 30.

Tuesday last being his Prussian Majesty's Birth-day, the same was observed here with the greatest Demonstrations of Joy. Immediately after Twelve o'Clock on Monday Night the Bells were set to ringing, and they were continued ringing, by different hands, the whole Day afterwards. In the Evening there were Bonfires, Fireworks, and Illumination of Windows; and so much regard was had to the Day that there was not a Publick House of any consequence in Town at which there was not a Meeting on the Occasion. Before the Bonfire at the Bird and Hand, where some very good Fireworks were played off, most of the Soldiers recruiting here fired Vollies, and during their several Discharges, many Loyal Healths were drank. At the same Place the following Ode, wrote by a Gentleman of this Town in Honour of the Day was sung.

Hail Day! by Providence design'd
To give its favourite Hero Birth;
When Heav'n in Pity to Mankind
Sent PRUSSIAN FREDERICK down to Earth.
Auspicious Day! for Liberty and Arts,
Triumph of Science fair, and Joy of honest Hearts.

Winter, Happy Season! thou
Well may boast thy darling Son,
Crown'd with Glories, wearing now
Laurels by thy Influence won.
May all the Seasons join to aid his Cause!
'Tis that of Sacred Truth, and wholesome Laws.

Nor Conquests only shew thy Mind,
Such Glory meaner Heroes share,
For others could subdue Mankind,
'Tis yours alone, O Prince, to spare;
'Tis yours alone to bend the stubborn Will,
And bid the stormy Passions of the Soul be still.

Winter, Happy Season! &c.

Wise, just, benevolent, and brave,
And nurs'd the Darling of the Nine,
Whilst other Kings their Realms enslave,
To cherish Liberty be thine!
Be ours, the precious Blessing to declare,
And with our grateful Mirth and Musick rend the Air.

Winter, Happy Season! &c.

What tho' pale Envy rears her Snakes,
And faithless Nations round him rise;
Round him *Bellona's* Thunder breaks
And Lightnings red confound the Skies;
Serene, triumphant, lo! the Hero stands,
Delight of all the Good, and Dread of barb'rous Bands,

Winter, Happy Season! &c.

Thus, if by Chance, in calm Repose,
 The Eagle makes a Rock his Bed,
 Around him flock his numerous Foes,
 And hover o'er his Royal Head ;
 Rous'd by Invaders base, he mounts on high,
 Divides the feathered Clouds, and soars his native Sky.
 Winter, Happy Season! &c.

On March 13, 1758, the following police notice was published :—

Birmingham, March 11, 1758.

Whereas the following incendiary Letter was put into the Letter-Box, at the Post Office in this Town, on Tuesday Night last ; whoever will discover the Author of the same, to the Constables shall receive of them a Reward of Ten Pounds, on his Conviction ; or if more than one were concerned, if either will discover his Accomplice or Accomplices, so that he or they may be convicted thereof, he shall receive the Same Reward.

“To the Gentlemen of Birmingham.

“As we have Long Strugled for this twelve months Past for the Scasety of Provition we think it very hard that the Gentlemen Never Considered it, for there is a Great meny that are Starved for ye Whant of Provition and We think it But Our Duty to Let you Know that if things are Not Altered for the Better We shall make Bold to take it from them Can Best Spar it for We are in great Whant as it as Plesed the Lord to Provide for Us Plentyfull Crops and for the Baggers & millers & bakers to Surve Us so We think that the Are No better then What you may Call Rougs but theres is a Company that will attend On them on the Next market Day So No more

“Till the Deed Proves itself.”

The following notice of the Churchwardens contains a pleasant bit of information :—

Birmingham, July 15, 1758.

I am directed by the Churchwardens to let the Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood know, that the Opening of St. Martin's Bells will be on Tuesday the 18th Instant, and those Gentlemen who will oblige me with their Company, the Favour shall be acknowledged by their humble Servant

William Stevenson,

At the Rose in Edgbaston Street.

N.B.—Dinner will be on the Table at One o'Clock.

In the year 1759 we have three references to the Free Grammar School :—

Birmingham, March 5th.

On Monday Night last died the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson, Rector of Wallington in Hertfordshire, and Head Master of the Free School in this Town, founded by King Edward the Sixth. And on Friday the Rev. Mr. Green, Second Master, was by the Governors of the said School, chose Head Master in his room.

Birmingham, March 12th.

On Wednesday the Rev. Mr. Wearden, who was third Master in the Free School of this town, was chosen second Master in the room of the Rev. Mr. Green.

August 6th, 1759.

The Gentlemen educated at the Free Grammar School in Birmingham, under the late Reverend Mr. Wilkinson, are desired to meet on Tuesday August 21st. at the Castle Inn in Birmingham.

The Rev. Edward Patterson }
The Rev. Joseph Mann } Stewards

Dinner to be on the Table at two o'Clock.

The Militia was in those days an important body ; and the references to them are numerous. Our local Militia had a grievance to which they gave utterance in the following petition :—

May 14, 1759.

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham.

The humble Petition of the Militia of the said Town—Sheweth

That whereas the Clothing distributed to the Militia of the County of Warwick, consisting only of a Coat and Pair of Breeches for each Man, and the Inhabitants in several Parts of the County have entered into a Subscription in order to compleat the Clothing of the Militia in their respective Districts, by furnishing them with Waistcoats. We, the Militia of the Town of Birmingham, who have shown our Loyalty and Zeal by entering Volunteers into the Service, humbly hope that the Inhabitants of the said Town will, agreeably to their accustom'd Generosity, grant us the same Encouragement which our Brethren in several Parts of the County have receiv'd from the public spirit of their Superiors.

They were, however, an efficient body of men ; and as our next extract proves, went through their exercises to the satisfaction of their superior officers.

Birmingham, May 26th.

On Friday last the two Companies of Militia raised in and near this Town, were exercised by the Honourable George Shirley, Esq. Major of the Regiment ; when they went through the whole Exercise with the greatest Exactness, and so much to the Satisfaction of the Officers, that they made them a handsome Present, which was equally divided amongst them. In Whitsun Week the whole Regiment will be exercised at Warwick, and on Monday and Wednesday Evenings in that Week there will be Balls at Warwick.

The war spirit was dominant in the nation, and no wonder that it was especially so in sword and gun making Birmingham. Nor was it allowed to die out for the want of fanning. Such an event as is recorded in our next extract was calculated to keep it at fever heat.

Birmingham, Oct. 20th.

Yesterday on receiving the first News of the Taking of Quebec, the Bells of both our Churches were set ringing, in the Evening were Bonfires and Illumination of Windows, and this Day the Bells are also ringing on the Occasion.

In December a Day of Thanksgiving was appointed to be kept ; this is the way in which loyal Birmingham responded :—

Birmingham, Dec. 3.

The Day of Thanksgiving for the Successes obtained by his Majesty's Arms was observ'd here with the greatest Devotion and Rejoicings; the Morning by crowded Churches, and the Evening with the Illumination of every Street, Bonfires, Fireworks, &c., and the Windows of our Cross Chamber were illuminated in the following manner: The Moon, with the Word France wrote upon it, gradually eclips'd till the whole Writing was covered.

Praise the Giver of all
Good, who hath been
pleased to signalize the
Year

1759

by so many and extraor-
dinary Victories.

A Portrait of his
Majesty King George with
a Glory over his Head
representing the Sun, on
which was inscribed
Britannia.

Bear Witness
Senegal, Goree, Minden,
Niagara,
Guadaloupe, &c.
And lastly thou
Quebec
won by the Arms of a
most magnanimous
King
And the conduct of a
Patriot Minister
Mr. Pitt.

On another Window was the following inscription:—

In Memory of the Brave General Wolfe, who hath himself raised a Monument more lasting than Brass, in the Hearts of grateful Britons.

At the Post-Office was an elegant illuminated canvass'd Frame, representing a Cornucopiæ on one side, a Trophy of Arms on the other, with the initial Letters G.R. and on the Front, Glory be to God, for Plenty and Victory. And in New Hall Walk, New-Meeting-Street, and other parts of the Town, were Windows also illuminated with different Devices. The Bells of both our Churches were rung a great Part of Yesterday, on Account of Admiral Hawke's Success over the Brest Fleet.

This will be of interest to the file trade:—

December 7, 1759.

At a general Meeting of the File Makers of Birmingham (on account of the great Advance of Steel) it was unanimously agreed to advance the Prices of Files, Rasps, &c. from this Day, in Proportion to that Advance; which they hope will not be taken amiss by their Customers, it being impossible to get them up at the Prices they have been hitherto sold for.

The following notice from the Governor of the Workhouse refers to a very strange proceeding on the part of those engaged in the Coal trade:—

Birmingham, December 24. 1759.

Whereas a Practice prevails among the People who are concerned in the Coal Trade to this Town, of selling Coals twice or thrice over, both before and after they reach the Machine: This is therefore to give Notice, that the Overseers of the Poor have given Orders to Mr. Dolphin to refuse weighing the Coals of such Persons as shall be detected of such unfair Practices, and 'tis hoped the Interest of the Inhabitants of this Town will excite them to discover such Persons.

Still remains in This Workhouse, Four Girls from 11 to 14 Years of Age, to be placed out Apprentices.

The Garden belonging to the said Workhouse having of late been frequently robb'd of Quantities of Greens; whoever will discover the Offender or Offenders so that they may be brought to Justice, shall receive half a Guinea Reward, and if more than one are concerned, whoever shall discover his or her Accomplice or Accomplices, shall be Pardon'd, and receive the same Reward from

WILLIAM BACHE, Governor of the Workhouse.

The notice quoted above respecting trading on a Sunday seems, like similar notices of a later date, to have had little effect, for on June 23, 1760, we find a second reminder of the law addressed this time to the barbers especially.

Whereas several Barbers have used their Trade upon Sundays, and commanded their Journeymen and Apprentices to do the same, contrary to and in manifest Violation of several Statutes to the contrary: Now whoever is found practising that, or any other Trade upon Sundays, after this publick Notice, will be informed against, and dealt with according to Law.

In 1760 an additional duty was put upon ale, and the publicans of the town were immediately astir. On February 9, 1761,

The Publicans of this Town are desired to meet at the House of Mr. Jordan, at the Dolphin in the Bull Ring, on Wednesday next, at Two o'Clock in the Afternoon, to consult of a proper Method, to petition his Majesty for a Repeal of the late Act for the addition of Duty on Ale.

On the next week another advertisement calling another meeting appeared, but we have no report of what was done at either of the meetings.

Birmingham, 16th, 1761.

The Publicans of this Town and Neighbourhood are desired to meet at Mr. Cook's Great Room in the Cherry-Orchard on Wednesday next the 18th Instant, at Two o'Clock in the Afternoon, to consider of a proper Application to be made to Parliament for a Repeal of the late Act for laying an additional Duty upon Ale.

As this is a matter of the utmost Consequence to Publicans in General and is thought necessary to apply before the Parliament breaks up which probably may be soon, it's hoped every one who conveniently can will attend.

The Malsters are likewise desired to give their Attendance.

On Monday, July 6, 1761, appeared the following notice of a death which will not be without interest to the reader. "On Saturday Night died, at his house at Holloway Head, where he had retired from business but a short Time, Mr. Thomas Aris, the late Printer of this Paper." And this is all that is said of the founder of the first

permanent newspaper in Birmingham.* *Requiescat in pace.* Few men have done a greater work for the town, and few have been allowed to go to their rest with so brief a memorial. But the people seem to have been too busy with public rejoicings over victories, and in keeping coronation days to bestow much time upon the death of him who established their first newspaper. On July 27 of the same year we read, "On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, we had great Rejoicings, such as Ringing of Bells, Bonfires, Fireworks, &c., on receiving the agreeable News of the Surrender of Pondicherry, the Taking the Island of Dominico, and Prince Ferdinand's Victory over the French Army."

King George III. was crowned on the 22nd of September, 1761, and on the 19th was sounded the following note of preparation :—

As it is expected there will be many Persons in Town on Tuesday next, the 22nd Instant, to celebrate his Majesty's Coronation, and in order that People may pass the Streets quietly this Notice is given, that whoever shall be found throwing Squibs, Crackers, or other Fireworks, or Breaking of Windows, on that Day, will be prosecuted with the utmost Severity of the Law.

How the town celebrated the event may be gathered from this extract :—

Birmingham, September 28.

On Tuesday, the Day of their Majesties' Coronation, was celebrated here with the utmost Loyalty; the Bells rung the whole Day; at Noon there were several Public Entertainments at which the Healths of the King and Queen, and all the Royal Family, were drank; in the Evening Ale was given to the Populace, Variety of curious Fireworks, Bonfires, &c., and the grandest Illuminations throughout the whole Town that ever were seen; in several Streets were Paintings representing his Majesty and his Royal Consort, and other emblematical Pieces expressive of the joyful Occasion; at the Post Office were the following Devices shewn from a square illuminated Frame: at the front was an elegant Representation of his Majesty's polite and affectionate Reception of the Queen at the Garden of St. James's Palace, with this Motto, Long live the King and Queen; on one Side was Cupid presenting a Couple of Hearts to Hymen, with this Motto, Britain and Mecklenburg united; and on the other Side was a Cornucopia shedding forth Ears of Corn, &c., &c., an emblem of those blessings which we have received in so bountiful a Manner from our great Creator, with this Motto, All Glory be to God. The Whole was conducted with so much Harmony and Order that there was not the least Disturbance, or a single Accident happened to any one.

* A newspaper, called the Birmingham Journal, was published as early as 1732, but its existence was a short one. The time was not ripe for such an undertaking, and it remained for Thomas Aris to perpetuate his name, and to earn the gratitude of posterity by founding the first successful newspaper in the town. Aris's Gazette is, therefore, the oldest of existing Birmingham newspapers. A copy of the twenty-eighth number of the Birmingham Journal, bearing date Monday, May 21, 1733, is in the possession of the proprietors of the paper now published under that title, and which was commenced on June 4, 1825. It is, locally considered, a very interesting document.

And we hear from all the neighbouring Towns, and even Villages, that there were the greatest Rejoicings ever known.

And with the sound of coronation bells ringing in the ears, the shouts of loyal citizens rending the air, the glow of loyal bonfires reflected on the clouds, and the beauty of loyal illuminations delighting the eyes, our good old ancestors ended the public life of our second decade.

§ 3. EDUCATION AND LITERARY LIFE.

We have no movement of a literary character to record during this decade of a like importance with that of the formation of the Book Club. Still the work of education was making progress; slowly, but still surely.

The importance of the arts of drawing and designing to a manufacturing town is now acknowledged by all persons, and laudable, and to a certain extent, successful efforts are being made to supply an acknowledged want. A principle which is now clear to the meanest capacity, was a hundred and twenty years ago, recognised only by the most acute and far-seeing men. We are glad to say that Birmingham possessed at least one such man. On January 19, 1754, a "Well Wisher" addressed the following sensible letter to the printer, and on the 21st it was published in the paper. We wish we knew the writer's name, but as it is we must rank him among the unknown worthies of the town. Such a letter, written so long ago, is a credit to the writer, and deserves to be reproduced. We sadly fear that it had little effect at the time; but such good work is never altogether thrown away:—

To the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.

That Arts and Commerce are the means of putting every Nation into a flourishing and respectable Condition, is now fully proved from the general practice of all Countries, and no People can be more sensible of it than the Inhabitants in and near this Place, who have felt the pleasing effects of it. This should put every Country upon considering as well how to increase the Number of Manufactures, as also how to improve such Manufactures as have been the general Employment of any particular Town or Place for some Time past.

It's supposed the Iron Manufactory hath been a considerable Employment in this Town for three hundred years past and upwards, and I have often heard it observ'd, that there are at this Time in it some as good working Hands for putting into execution any Plan or Design in the Iron Way, as are to be met with in any other Place; but they are still wanting in the Art of Drawing and Designing. This is such an Impediment

as calls out for a speedy Relief. It's a Reproach to the Manufacturers of this Place to have it declared and confess'd that if a Gentleman here wants to be supplied with a Pair of Gates and a few Palisadoes, for his own Use, that he must apply to Derby or Warwick to be furnished. If a Deficiency in the Art of Drawing and Designing is the great Obstruction to our making a more considerable Figure in the Iron, or any other Manufactory, than what we have hitherto done, why is not some Method fix'd upon for improving that Art amongst us? The People in Birmingham don't want Generosity to encourage any useful Undertaking, when it is promoted upon any rational Principles; and I dare venture to affirm, that if an Academy or School was to be set up by Subscription for teaching some Young Persons, under proper Restrictions, in the Art of Drawing and Designing, and in some parts of Mathematical Learning, as have the Appearance of promoting any useful Manufactory, that proper Encouragement will be given to it suitable to the Undertaking. These are the Thoughts of

A.B. A Well-wisher to Birmingham.

Birmingham, Jan. 19th, 1754.

In May we read:—

French, Drawing, and Sewing, Taught over-against the Gardens in Park-Street, Birmingham, at an easy Rate. Also Fans mounted, and Boxes painted by

J. M. DE RIDDER.

Thomas Taylor, School-master in the High-Town, Birmingham, having been called to Norwich on an affair that greatly concern'd his Interest, and being detain'd ten Days in the Isle of Ely, by Reason of the Floods, hopes his Friends will excuse his Absence, he likewise hopes none that please to send their Children to him, will think much of Two-pence Half-penny per week, or Two Shillings and Six-pence per Quarter, for which they shall be carefully taught English Grammar and Orthography, after the most proper method.

By their most obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS TAYLOR.

In October of the same year this advertisement appeared:—

Parents and Guardians are hereby informed That a Boarding School is now ready to receive Young Ladies, in Church Street, Birmingham, being an Airy part of the Town; where the true method of Spelling and Reading will be taught, and all sorts of Needle Work in the neatest Manner; Great care will be taken in all Respects, and the tenderest Treatment may be depended on, by

M. WILLIAMS.

* * A Drawing-Master, French and Writing Master, will attend.

On August 29, 1757, Mr. Devoto thus makes his merits known:—

To the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

Gentlemen,

I take this Method to inform you, that I intend to open a DRAWING-SCHOOL for the Instruction of youth, in all the different Branches of DRAWING; (for which Purpose I have taken a large commodious Room in New-Hall Street,) to begin on the 3rd of October next, and to be continued on the Evenings of every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. As I have a fine collection of the Performances of the most eminent Masters, I flatter myself I shall meet with Encouragement. The other three Evenings of the Week, I propose to teach young Gentlemen to perform on the following Instruments of Music, viz., the GERMAN FLUTE, BASS VIOL, and FRENCH HORN; and the Public may

be assured no Pains or Care shall be wanting in me, to improve the youth committed to my care, and the Favours I receive will be gratefully acknowledged by, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient, and most humble servant,

JOHN DEVOTO.

At Mr. John Guest's in New Street.

Of the local poetry of this period we present two specimens, which every reader will, we fear, consider quite enough. The whole ten years affords us no verse at all comparable to the poem on the Origin of Birmingham, dedicated to Baskerville in 1751. But without further comment we give the lines. The first appeared in May, 1756, and is called:—

A THOUGHT WHILST RIDING TO TAKE THE AIR.

(*By an elderly Gentleman.*)

I little else can do from Day to Day,
But ride, eat, drink, and sleep the Time away.
Feeble with Age, helpless and useless grown,
My trust will I repose in God alone.
Age, nor Disease, nor Death itself can harm,
Securely fenced by his Almighty Arm.
His Goodness great, by long Experience tried,
Assureth me where I may safely hide.
My God, my Rock, my Fortress and strong Tower,
Nothing I fear,—supported by thy Power.
O may I finish well my part assigned!
Then—Welcome Death or Life—I am resigned.

On November 26, 1759, a local patriot thus celebrated the death of General Wolfe.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF GENERAL WOLFE AND THE SUCCESS OF THE BRITISH ARMS.

I.

Arms, and the man, my muse inspires,
While Britain's cause my bosom fires,
To sing of glorious deeds!
Yet though she hears Fame's trumpet sound,
Sees vict'ry smile with laurels crown'd,
Her breast with pity bleeds.

2.

For Wolfe—(Oh, dreadful fate of war!)
Returns in death's triumphal car,
To greet his native isle;
See! See! his trophy'd plumes appear,
And Britons shed the gen'rous tear,
Which drowns each grateful smile.

3.

Those grateful smiles,—for great success,
Th' exulting heart,—joy'd to express,
For favours heav'n displays:

Since wisdom guides the helm of state
 Our warriors brave, act truly great !
 Demand immortal praise.

4.

Lo, Wolfe !—when honour, glory calls,
 Soon mounts rough rocks and lofty walls,
 Where Quebec's tow'rs arise :
 There led his troops undaunted on,
 And saw that glorious conquest won,
 In which he bravely dies.

5.

Just in the florid bloom of youth !—
 Was so attach'd to honour, truth,
 That pleasure's smiles were vain :
 Whether she sparkled in the bowl,
 Or wanton loves, t'enchant the soul,
 Yet firm he did remain.

6.

While others in the lap of ease
 Supinely rest—and waste their days,
 Where lux'ry courage palls :
 But he ! the toils of war sustains,
 No coward shifts his honour stains,
 But flies !—tho' danger calls.

7.

While thro' his wounds rich crimson flow'd,
 His gen'rous heart with raptures glow'd,
 Nor shrunk beneath his fate :
 But freely for his country bled ;
 Th' expiring hero bow'd his head.
 Thus early clos'd life's date.

8.

Since thus he fell,—let's shout and sing !
 While Fame extends her joyful wing,
 And spreads abroad the sound :
 Which Echo wafts from shore to shore ;
 The Hero's virtues, all adore,
 Are now with honour crown'd.

9.

Repeat the strain,—let's shout and sing,
 Long live great George ! our glorious king !
 Proud Gallia's schemes are vain :
 Britannia's vengeful thunder roars,
 And shakes with fear their guilty shores ;
 The triumphs o'er the main.

§ 4. AMUSEMENTS.

The amusements of this decade are the same as those of the preceding one. There is no change for the better. Cock-fighting is the one principally advertised.

We have giants also, and learned dogs brought for the delectation of our ancestors. There were giants before Chang; and one of these Anaks of the earth appeared in Birmingham in 1752. On May the 4th in that year, the *Gazette* was decorated with a wood cut of the "modern living Colossus," who was about to pay the town a visit. In the illustration there is the usual dwarf, and ordinary sized man placed in juxtaposition and contrast with Anak, just as our exhibitors of giants manage their business at the present time. Under the engraving is the following announcement. It may be noted as a curious fact that although the description of the "Colossus" is rather minute, we are not told how tall he was :—

This is to acquaint the Curious, That there is coming to this Town Mr. Blaker, the modern Living Colossus, or wonderful Giant, who has given such wonderful satisfaction in London, will be to be seen at the London Apprentice, in Birmingham, at the Fair and for some Time after. This Phenomenon in Nature hath already had the Honour of being inspected by great Numbers of the Nobility and Gentry, by many of the Royal Society, and several Gentlemen and Ladies who are Lovers of Natural Curiosities; who allow him to be a stupendous Height, and esteem him the best proportion'd of his Size they ever saw. He is above half a Foot taller than the Sussex Boy, lately shown at the Mansion House, in the Poultry. He infinitely excels the famous Swedish Giant in Symetry of Body and Regularity of Features; and is much higher than Maximillian Miller the Saxon. He is not yet Twenty-seven years of Age; and what is worthy of Notice, has grown above eleven Inches within these seven years. He has been seen, with an agreeable Surprise (if I may be allowed the Expression) by several Persons of Distinction from Abroad, by some Foreign Ministers, and by Gentlemen from most Countries in Europe, who have given him pressing Invitations to exhibit himself at their several Courts.

He is to be seen by any Number of Persons, from Nine in the Morning till Nine at Night, without Loss of Time.

From a giant to a learned dog is perhaps not a very great descent; however, the Birmingham people had the opportunity of making it in 1752. In September we read the following curious description of the capabilities of the "Learned English Dog," then exhibiting in the town :—

We hear that of all the extraordinary Curiosities that have been exhibited in this Town, none have met with such general Approbation and Esteem as the learned English Dog, from the great number of Gentlemen and Ladies that daily resort to see him, who actually reads, writes, and casts Accompts, by means of Typographical Cards, in the same manner that a Printer composes; and by the same Method, answers various questions in Ovid's Metamorphoses; Geography; the Roman, English, and Sacred History; knows the Greek Alphabet; reckons the number of Persons present, if not above thirty; sets down any Sir-name, or Capital Name, which is not too difficult to spell; solves small Questions in the four Rules of Arithmetic; tells, by looking on any common Watch of the Company, what is the Hour and Minute; knows the foreign as well as English Coins. He likewise shows the impenetrable Secret, or tells any Person's Thoughts in Company; and distinguishes all sorts of Colours. As the Proprietor intends to stay here but a very short Time, he has reduced his Price to Sixpence each, less than which will never be taken, and he assures the Publick that this is the first Time of so low a Price being submitted to.

Note.—He waits on Gentlemen or Ladies, at their Houses, if required. The Original impenetrable Secret to be sold.

A few concerts are announced; and the plays at the theatre are still performed *gratis* after a charge has been made for a musical entertainment. A specimen of how the "poor strollers" were treated is afforded by the following notice, which appeared in July 7, 1756: "The Company of Players acting in this Town are hereby desired to take notice that if any one of them attempt a *Benefit Play*, the Law will be immediately put in force against them."

A different kind of entertainment was afforded the townsfolks this year by the arrival of an Italian Hussar. He came in November, 1756, and was thus announced:—

This is to acquaint the Public, and all Admirers of uncommon Performances, that there is now arrived in this Town an Italian Hussar, and his Company of Liliputians, just arrived from Italy and other Parts of Europe; they having performed, with universal Applause, before the University of Oxford, as well as before most of the Courts in Europe: Besides many other surprising Performances, the following will be exhibited. First various Feats of Activity, and astonishing Attitudes, in a Manner not to be believed without seeing: The whole to conclude with a new Machine called Theatori Mathematica, or Pictoresque. Boxes 2s. Pit 1s. Gallery 6d.

N.B. They will perform every night this Week

Next week the *Gazette* thus notices these "uncommon performances:"—

The Hussar that has been performing the last week in this Town, will also exhibit on this Day, Wednesday, and Friday. Besides his company of Liliputians, and wonderful Feats of Activity, he will exhibit many performances on the Wire, and some which have never been done by any Person but himself; such as balancing two Straws at one Time,

one on his Nose, and the other on his Forehead; he will drink Tea on a Board put on the Wire, with three of his Liliputians on it the same Time, and will go in full Swing. And as tossing the Straw is so much in vogue, none are, or ever were, capable of doing so much with it as this Hussar, which is allowed by all that have seen him perform. To begin each Night at Half an Hour after Seven o'Clock.

There were brave men before Agamemnon says the poet; and there were fools before—well, we will not say who; but the following extract records a feat of one of the old stulti.

July 17, 1758.

On Saturday se'ennight Mr. Morson won a considerable Wager by getting off the Battlements of St. Martin's Church in this Town, which is upwards of 73 Feet high, without the Help of Ladder, Rope, &c., by dropping from Corner Stone to Corner Stone.

Duddeston Hall, commonly called Vauxhall, and the Apollo Gardens at Aston, were the principal places of public amusements. The poet Freeth, as we shall see, sung at a later date the glories of Vauxhall. In June, 1758, the public are informed that

Duddeston Hall, commonly called Vauxhall, near Birmingham in Warwickshire, is now fitted up in a neat and commodious Manner for the reception of Travellers; it lies in the direct road between Liverpool, Warrington, West-Chester, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Oxford; and is much nearer than going through Birmingham. It is conveniently situated for most of the great roads that pass thro' Birmingham, and by going this Way, Gentlemen, &c. avoid riding near two Miles upon the Stones: Hands with Directions, will be set up in proper Places: All Noblemen, Gentlemen, and others, that please to make use of the House, shall find good accommodations and reasonable Charges, with grateful Acknowledgments, By their most obedient humble Servant,

ANDREW BUTLER.

The Garden for Publick Entertainments continued as usual.

Cricket was not entirely neglected by our forefathers, for on July 14, 1760, we read

A Society of Cricket Players of Birmingham would Play a Match there, the best three Innings, with any others within 30 Miles of the Place, for 20 Guineas, and another Match for the like sum, at the Town from whence they may come.—Whoever chooses to accept this Challenge may apply to Thomas Bellamy, at the Bell in Smallbrook Street, Birmingham.

In September of the same year we have also evidence that music had a place in the affections of old Birmingham. On that day we are told that "the Performance of the Oratorios of Samson, Messiah, and Judas Maccabæus, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday last, conducted by Mr. Hobbs, was honour'd with very polite Audiences, and received the greatest Applause."

We need not repeat the notices which continually occur of cock-fighting. The announcements of such events to come off are more

numerous than those of any kind of amusements except, perhaps, the theatre. A report of one of these mains which was published May 25, 1761, we quote as much for the anecdote attached to it, as for the account furnished of the match.

The second of the 7 Years Main subsisting between the Gentlemen of Birmingham and Bridgnorth, was decided in Favour of the Birmingham Gentlemen, at Duddeston-Hall, in the Whitsun-Week, by 8 Battles a-head in the Main and 14 in the Byes: What was very remarkable out of 61 Cocks weighed, 58 were matched. Next Year the 3rd Main will be fought at the Crown in Bridgnorth in Whitsun-week.

At the above Cocking, a gay young Fellow, of a very good Family near Bridgnorth, having lost all his Money (which was a considerable Sum) apply'd to a Recruiting Officer, and enlisted himself; but as soon as he had received the Advance-Money, he returned to the Cock-Pit, and again deeply engaged in the Bets, and being so fortunate as to win between nine and ten Pounds more than he had before lost, quitted the Pit, and immediately repaired to the Officer to whom he had enlisted, came to terms with him for a Discharge, and then returned home.

The Birmingham Theatres were in their usual activity, and some of the best plays in the language were performed at them. We have nothing like criticism in the very brief notices which are given of the performances. In July, 1761, however, one spectator was inspired to tell us in rhyme what he thought of the acting. His Muse laboured and thus she was delivered :—

When Salop's Sons from Labour rest,
And Phœbus journeys down the West,
Theatric-Bills invite :
I go, with many hundreds more,
And drop two Shillings at the Door,
To see 'em every Night.

I went to see the Jealous Wife,
And what cou'd more resemble Life,
Or touch the human Heart?
O—CUTTER with his Comic-Song,
Delighted the attentive Throng,
And each one topp'd their Part.

What need I then exhibit Names,
Since purest Critics sound Acclaims?
And say,—“their Rival Queens
“Had those who acted here before
“Been present at—they'd Play no more,
“But sell their Cloaths and Scenes.”

§ 5. MANNERS, CUSTOMS, ETC.

The whirligig of fashion brings round stranger revenges than the whirligig of time.

In reading the following lines, which appeared July 27, 1754, one almost feels as if, but for the abominable versification, they were written in the present day (1866), so like the sights we now see daily in the streets and elsewhere are some of those satirised by the author.

A-la mode, 1754 :

The Dress in the year Fifty-three that was worn,
Is laid in the Grave, and new Fashions are born ;
Then hear what our good Correspondents advance,
'Tis the Pink of the Mode, and 'tis dated from France.
Let your Cap be a Butterfly, slightly hung on,
Like the Shell of a Lapwing just hatched on her Crown,
Behind, with a Coach-Horse short dock cut your Hair,
Stick a Flower before, skew-wiff with an air ;
A Vandyke in Frize your Neck must surround,
Turn your Lawns into gauze, let your Brussels be Blond ;
Let your Stomacher reach from Shoulder to Shoulder,
And your breast will appear much fairer and bolder ;
Wear a Gown or a Sack, as Fancies prevail,
But with Flounces, and Furbelows, ruffle your Tail ;
Let your Hoop shew your Stockings, and Legs to your Knees,
And leave Men as little as may be to guess.
For other small Ornaments do as before,
Wear Ribbons a Hundred, and Ruffles a Score ;
Let your Talk, like your Dress, be fantastic and odd,
And you'll shine in the Mall, 'tis Taste a-la mode.

The change, however, has already set in ; and as fashion never did, and it appears, never will know any medium, it is probable that before these lines are published our wives will wear dresses so narrow, that like our mothers, they will not be able to step across an ordinary gutter.

The following extract tells us of a custom which might be restored with advantage. The occurrence took place in January, 1756.

Last Thursday, and the Market Day before, the proper Officers here *seized considerable Quantities of Butter which wanted weight, and gave it away to the Poor*, and tried a great Number of Market Measures, among which many were deficient, the Owners of which are taken an account of, in order for prosecution. Inspectors are also employed to detect that illegal Practice of Forestalling the Market. Example_worthy of imitation, where the same Grievances are complained of.

On December 13, "The Members of the Society of COMUS are desired to attend the Court on Wednesday next, at their new Place of Residence. By Order of the GRAND.

Supper on the Table at Seven o'Clock. Carpe Diem."

What has become of the Society of Comus and who was its Grand?
Alas

"The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the earth,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan."

And even Societies of Comus and their Grand pass away and we hear no more of them for ever.

Our next extracts show that there were schemes and schemers in those days. On February 28, 1757, the following notice appeared:—

As several Gentlewomen have only the Interest of a small Sum of Money to maintain them, which at this time is very low; a Person has form'd a Scheme for the Benefit of such; whereby whoever adventures in it, will receive 10 or 12*l.* per Cent. yearly advantage from their money, at least, and sometimes considerably more; and the Principal as well secur'd as at present. No Gentlewomen to advance above the sum of 500, nor under the Sum of 100*l.*; neither will any Gentlewomen be admitted who is married, or has a Father living.

On March 7, Mary Turner narrates the result of her enquiries respecting this proposal.

To the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.

I waited on one of the gentlemen, according to the Directions in your Paper, and saw the Proposals, which I liked very well, and proposed to advance the Sum of four hundred Pounds; after which I was asked many Questions, and then was told, it was not design'd for such as me, who had enough to Maintain me without; I can't say but I was vex'd at my Disappointment, in riding eight dirty Miles for nothing, but next Day was better satisfied, when I consider'd, that it was intended for the Fatherless and Widow; and I wish Success to the Scheme: Please to insert this in your next, for the Good of my Sex.

I am your Humble Servant, MARY TURNER.

On the next Monday this "editorial" paragraph (if the *Gazette* of that period contained such a thing, of which we doubt) appeared:—"We can assure the Public, that the Scheme for the Benefit of Gentlewomen of small Fortunes, has been so well approved of, that no less than £2,300 was subscribed last Week."

The mode of travelling in 1757 is well illustrated by this brief announcement, which appeared on June 27:—"Any Person of Character

who would ride a good and easy Horse from London to Birmingham may hear of one by applying to the Printer of this Paper."

The next two extracts are curious, and bring the life of old Birmingham rather vividly before us. The first is dated August 1, and the second Nov. 7, 1757.

Any one that wants Money (upon an Emergency) in small Sums, not Lower than Twenty Shillings, giving good Security, may be supplied on reasonable Terms by William Snibson, near the Rib in St. John Street, Birmingham.—In Mr. Morris's Entry, turning in at the first door on the Right Hand, you'll meet with him.

William Weston, of Tamworth, who has carried on the Cod-Fish Trade for more than twenty years past, and flatters himself with having given general Content, begs leave to acquaint his Friends, That his Cod-Fish Stage comes in at the Bull's Head, near the Welch-Cross Birmingham, on Tuesday Morning the 15th of November, and again on Friday Morning the 18th following, and will continue (as usual) twice a Week, where Cod Fish will be sold Retale, together with Wild Fowl, Oysters, &c. upon the most reasonable Terms, By their humble Servant,

W. WESTON.

N.B.—Any Person having Goods to carry, requiring extraordinary Expedition, to any Parts of the North (not exceeding Two Hundred Pounds weight each Parcel) may have them forwarded regularly by the above Cod Fish Stage, with the usual care, every Tuesday and Friday Morning.

Ingenuity and poverty often went hand in hand then as they do now. The following advertisement might be paralleled by similar ones in our own day. In April, 1756, an unknown mechanic thus appealed to the public. Whether anything ever came of the appeal there is no evidence to show.

I, * * * of * * * having been always employed in Business as an Artizan or Manufacturer (now upwards of fifty years of age) have a Conception, and some Experience, of a certain Manufacture not yet practised, which being presumed of general use, may consequently have its particular Advantages; But the Property must be secured by Patent or Parliament. To carry the Proposition into Execution, as Trade, an Assistant or Partner becomes necessary. If this Hint excites the attention of any one used to Business and Accounts, and willing to be so still, and employ in this new proposed Undertaking, under his own Inspection, a Sum or Sums of Money, as it may become necessary, from a few Hundreds to a few Thousand Pounds and will, before the 20th of May, Send his Name and Place of Abode, with such other Requisites as himself may think necessary, seal'd and directed to Philo Benveno, to be left at the Hen and Chickens in Birmingham, such person shall be answer'd or otherwise made acquainted with the Person or Particulars above meant.

Our forefathers took many things very coolly. It is difficult for us to comprehend a state of things in which two such notices as the following could be issued without complaint. In these days of railways and incessant travel, it takes us back to a quiet, easy-going, contented

state of existence to read that on February 4, 1760, the dwellers in this town were informed that "The Horses belonging to the Birmingham Stage Coach are so much affected by the present Distemper that prevails among them, that its Journies are obliged to be discontinued till their Recovery."

In the week following this notice appears :—

February 11th, 1760.—The Horses belonging to the Birmingham Stage, are still so bad, that it would be dangerous to attempt their going with the Coach this Week ; but on Monday next, the 18th, Mr. Peyton proposes that the Coach shall set out, to go from hence as usual ; after which he hopes it will meet with no Interruption.

The difficulties of ladies in finding husbands were not entirely unknown to the daughters of our great grandmothers. Two of these unfortunate young spinsters dwelt in Birmingham in 1761 ; and on April 27 of that year thus publicly made known their desires. It is questionable whether the "men of sense" would be those likely to respond to such an appeal.

To the Men of Sense : Wanted, for two young Ladies, whose persons are

Amiable, straight, and free

From natural or chance Deformity,—POMFRET

two agreeable Partners for Life, Men of Integrity and Worth, between the Age of 24 and 30 ; if in Trade will be most agreeable. They are Ladies about the same Age, with very handsome Fortunes, and whose Characters will bear the strictest Enquiry. None need apply but those who wish to be concerned, for none but Principles will be treated with.

It is curious to note how customs repeat themselves. During the last few years a stand has been made by tradesmen against the giving of Christmas boxes. They are but walking in the steps of their predecessors, who, as vainly as their followers, tried to abolish a custom of which we scarcely know whether to say it is more honoured in the breach than the observance, or not. However, in November, 1760, this advertisement was published, and continued for several weeks. A similar advertisement appeared from the grocers, &c., of Kidderminster, Stourbridge, and Wolverhampton, so that it has the appearance of a combined action against the custom. It did not however succeed.

The Grocers, Druggists, Tea-Sellers, &c. in Birmingham, give this Notice to their Customers, that they have all unanimously agreed to leave off the Custom of giving Christmas Boxes for the future, and hope it will not be took amiss, as the Profits of Grocery and Tea in general are so much reduced, that they will not admit of it.

It is not necessary to quote the numerous notices of highway robberies which marked these times. The badness of the roads, the

absence of gas, the weakness and inefficiency of the police, and the cruelty of the punishments caused robberies with violence to be quite common. We read almost every week of gentlemen being robbed by footpads in or near Birmingham, and we are horrified at the number of executions recorded for comparatively trivial offences. That this cruelty of the law did not diminish crime is now universally admitted. The next extract is a bit of a thief's biography, which will show how successfully the light-fingered gentry of a hundred years since pursued their avocation. This man, it will be seen, was hanged for robbing a carrier. The date is April, 1756.

On Saturday, Samuel Edwards, who was convicted for robbing Mr. Phillips, the Stourbridge Carrier, was executed at Warwick. He behaved with great Decency at the Place of Execution; some time before which he confessed that he had been concerned in the following Robberies since July last, viz. The Robbery of a Man asleep between Stourbridge and Kidderminster, of 9s.—A Man at Kidderminster, being Drunk, of almost 3*l*.—Stole three Horses, one from Bilson, one between Bilson and Oaken, and one at Oaken.—Two Horses near Leominster, and one by the Clee Hills.—Robbed two Men within a Mile and a half of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the Road to Henley, of 3*s*. 3*d*.—A Man within three Miles of Worcester, of about 8*s*.—Two Men near the same Place of about 16*s*.—A Man near Shrewsbury of about 1*s*. 6*d*.—A Man near the same Place of his Watch and about 2*l*. 10*s*.—Two Men near the same Place of about 19*s*.—A Man near Welchpool of 7*s*.—A Man near Leominster of 3*s*.—Stole a Mare out of a Close near Leominster.—Robbed a man at the Clee Hills of about 10*l*.—Stole 15 or 16 Geese out of a barn near Tamworth.—Robbed three Men near Bishop's Castle of about 1*l*.—Two Men and a Woman near Shrewsbury, of a Watch and a Snuff-box, and 14*s*. 6*d*.—A Man near Shiffnall, of his Watch, and about 1*l*.—A Man in the Road to Stourbridge of about 3*s*. 6*d*.—A Man between Birmingham and Halesowen of his Watch, and 4*l*. 14*s*. 6*d*.—A Man near Walsall, of his Watch and about 2*l*. 3*s*.—A Man between Bridgnorth and Wolverhampton, of 3*d*. but returned it again.—A Man within two Miles of Wenlock, of a Piece of Cloth and 1*l*. 10*s*.—A Man within two Miles of Ludlow, of about 1*l*. 4*s*.—A Man near Ludlow of his Watch, Pocket-Piece and 4*s*.—Two Men at Keinton in Wales of about 1*l*. 18*s*.—A Man at Rudgely, of his Watch and about 2*l*. 2*s*.—A Man three Miles from Bridgnorth of his Watch and 3 Halfpence.—Two Men near Bridgnorth of about 3*l*. 7*s*.—Two Men near Birmingham, of a Watch and about 2*l*. 2*s*.—Three Men at Cotshill-Wood, near Wolverhampton, of about 1*l*.—A Man near Tamworth of about 2*l*. 3*s*.—Two Men between Lichfield and Walsall, of 31*l*.—A Man at West-Bromwich of his Watch and about 1*l*. (he had his Watch again of the Gaoler).—A Man on the Worcester Road near Birmingham, of a Watch and about 10*s*.—Besides eleven Watches, seven Horses, and Abundance of other Things.

Edwards's Mother attended him before the Execution, by whom she was desired to take his Body to his Place of Nativity, near Ludlow, to be interr'd, which she was enabled to do by the contributions she received from the Gentlemen of Warwick.

THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING CHARITY SCHOOL.

The oldest and certainly one of the most useful Charities in the Town is the Blue Coat School. It was built in 1724, and for nearly one hundred and fifty years has fed, clothed, educated, and put out to different trades and professions "friendless orphans, or the children of such poor people as cannot supply them with food and raiment."* Next in date, and next in importance to this charity is the Protestant Dissenting School. "This valuable Institution," says the Rev. Samuel Bache, "was founded in 1760, by the Societies of the Old and New Meeting Houses."† There is no record of the meeting at which the resolution to found the charity was passed; the minutes not having been collected and entered in a book until the year 1783. The various Secretaries had however been very careful of their papers, and we have a rather complete record of the meetings and the business transacted from the 22nd of June, 1761. This is called the first General Meeting, and it was resolved "That a Committee, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Collector should be chosen for the sole management of the Charity during one year, under such regulations as had been agreed to." These regulations are not given. At the next meeting, June 29, the following gentlemen were appointed the first Committee :

John Kettle	Michael Lakin	W. Hawkes, Sen.
William Ryland	Samuel Harvey	John Lee
Thomas Abney	Samuel Richards	J. Ryland
James Piddock	Samuel Blyth	Samuel Lucas
Thomas Bedford	Joseph Smith	John Rogers

Mr. J. Kettle was appointed Treasurer, the Rev. Mr. Blyth, Secretary, and Mr. W. Ryland, Collector ; and it was resolved that the next Committee meeting be held at the Anchor Inn, Spiceal Street.

The Committee had considerable difficulty in finding suitable premises. On July 7, a house in Old Meeting Street, part of it the property of Messrs. Kettle, Smith, and Abney, was proposed as a proper house for the use of the Charity. The question was discussed, and the Committee adjourned, some of the members being "desired to get what information they could relative to this or any other house that

* Morfitt's Letters in the Harvest Home, v. 1, page 319.

† Outline of the History and Plan of the School, page 3.

might be suitable." The Committee met again on July 21, but nothing was resolved upon, as the owner of the property was determined not to let, and the Committee was not able to purchase. At their next meeting Thomas Cartwright offered to build "conveniences for the Charity if the Committee and he could agree upon terms." Messrs. Hawkes and Blyth were desired to view the ground, and ask Mr. Cartwright to meet the Committee. This was done, and plans were drawn, and estimates of the charges made, which were submitted to the Committee on August 11, but nothing came of them, as Mr. Cartwright "insisted upon £18 per annum rent, which was more than the Committee could afford. The next meeting was held at Freeth's Coffee House, on August 18, and Mr. Cartwright's plans were dismissed with a vote of compensation. It was again proposed that the house in Old Meeting Street should be taken "either upon their own account or for the use of the Old Meeting Society, and then let it to the Charity on reasonable terms. To see what could be done in this way the Committee agreed to wait a month. On September 15 they again met at the same place, but no progress had been made in providing premises for the School. It was then agreed to appoint one person from the Old Meeting Society, and another from themselves, "of supposed judgment and impartiality, to survey the house, and whatever they should agree it was worth in its present state, it should be sold for." At a meeting held at "Marion's Lamp, Moor Street," Mr. Lakin reported that they had purchased the house and offered it to the Committee on the following terms: They were to pay £5 per cent. per annum for money advanced in the purchase, viz.: £90, and for what should be laid out in putting it into repair; besides £5 per annum charged upon the said house to Miss Bourn. The house to be repaired, and the Committee to enter on it at Christmas next as tenants from year to year.

The house having been obtained, the next thing to be done was to find a master. At a meeting held at Marion's, on November 10, this subject was considered, and this minute made: "A master for the Charity School being now wanted, and Mr. Thomas Cartwright having sometimes dropped a hint that he should be pleased with the office, Messrs. Kettle and Piddock were desired to talk with him upon this head, and report his sentiments to the Committee at their next meet-

ing." Mr. Cartwright, however, declined; and Messrs. Leach and Joseph Elliot, jun., were the first candidates for the office. The Committee, at a meeting held December 8, resolved to recommend Elliot to a general meeting as School Master; Messrs. Kettle and Blyth were also appointed "to visit the Charity School in the New Church Yard, to see the lads and consult Mr. Cotterell relative to the management of the School." The General Meeting was held in the New Meeting Vestry on December 15; Mr. Elliot was elected School Master. Mr. W. Ryland was requested to collect the first half-year's subscriptions, in place of his father, deceased. Subscribers were desired to recommend children as fitting objects of the Charity, boys and girls above 6 and under 12 being eligible. Then follows this entry, "It being inconvenient for Mr. John Marion, at the Lamp, in Moor Street, to entertain the gentlemen of the Committee, they adjourned from the New Meeting House Vestry to the Castle Inn." They then sent for Mr. Elliot and acquainted him of his election. The School Master attended the next meeting of the Committee at the Dog Inn, Spiceal Street, and took the minutes. On January 19, 1762, the Committee agreed upon the clothing for the boys, a suit of green, and resolved that they should "wear hats and not caps." It was also resolved to admit "two girls as well as ten boys." At a meeting held in the School House, January 26, the first election took place, and the following is a list of the first inmates of this School:—

Benjamin Stone	William Pratt	Josh. Bradeley
William Moss	Thomas Key	Sarah Chambers
Josiah Hunt	James Wells	William Ryland
Samuel Smith	Richard Matchet	Elizabeth Ash

Elizabeth Ash was sent in by mistake, but was "accepted of upon Mr. John Kettle's assurance that, if this Committee should not be able to maintain the child at the year's end, he would." On February 9, the Committee allowed the boys stocks.

We quote from the Minute Book: "The Order and Manner of spending their Common Time to be observed by the Children belonging to the Charity School.

1.—The Children are to rise at six every morning in the week, except the Lord's Day morning.

2.—As soon as they are dressed they are to be put upon saying such short and easy forms of prayer as shall be thought suitable to their age.

3.—Having gone through their private prayers, with decency and seriousness, they are to attend family Worship, which is to be carried on by the Master's or one of the children's reading a chapter out of the New Testament, or some practical book of the Old, and repeating the Morning Prayer for the Day out of Mr. Bourn's Family Prayer Book, or such other form as the Committee for the time being shall direct to the use of.

4.—Family Prayer being over, the Children are to attend their Schooling till eight.

5.—At eight they are to breakfast, and after breakfast they may play till nine; the Master taking care that they do not exceed their bounds, nor use profane, or any indecent Language, or be otherwise guilty of Rudeness or Immodesty.

6.—From nine till eleven the Children are to work when work can be had, and then go into School for one hour, viz.: till twelve. But when no work is to be had they must attend the School from nine till twelve.

7.—From twelve till two they are to dine and play, under the restrictions mentioned in the 5th head of instructions.

8.—From two till four and from four till five the same regulations take place as from nine to twelve.

9.—From five till six they may be left to choose their own employment, provided they are not guilty of any abuses.

10.—At six the Children are to sup, and immediately after supper to attend Family Worship, which is to be carried on in the same manner as in the Morning.

11.—After Family prayer they are to be at liberty till they go to bed, except so much time as shall be required for Reading a short Psalm and saying their private prayers.

N.B.—The children are none of them to be out of bed after nine o'clock, but such of them as choose it may go to bed sooner.

Regulations are given as to Diet, Holidays, and the order and manner of spending the Lord's Day.

The first year's working was financially successful, as will be seen by this statement of receipts and expenditure :

	£	s.	d.
Receipts—Annual Subscriptions	172	5	6
Collected at the Charity Sermon	51	7	3
A Benefaction	1	1	0
	<hr/>		
	£224	13	9
Expenditure... ..	149	12	9½
	<hr/>		
Balance	£75	0	11½

The first Charity Sermon was preached on May 9, 1762, by the Rev. Mr. Worthington, of Leicester, at the New Meeting House in the morning, and at the Old in the afternoon, from Psalm xli. 1. "Blessed is he that giveth to the poor." Dr. Doddridge's 205th Hymn was

sung after the sermon, and after the last prayer an anthem from Psalm xli. In the year 1764 the balance in hand reached £135 19s. 7d., and the Committee purchased an Indian bond for £100. On November 24, 1783, the Committee resolved to take the whole house in Old Meeting Street, and passed a very important resolution, which it is to be regretted they did not pass at a much earlier period; or what would have been still better, kept their minutes properly entered from the first. They express the "desirability of collecting the minutes as far as can now be done, from the first institution to the present time, and entered into a book in which all future minutes should be kept." The secretaries still living were requested to collect their respective papers.

The Birmingham printer, John Baskerville, had bequeathed to this Charity £500; but a difficulty was raised about obtaining the money. At a Committee meeting held February 9, 1784, Mr. Jackson produced an extract from the will in the following words, viz.: "Five Hundred Pounds to the Committee, for the time being, of the Protestant Dissenting Charity School, in Birmingham, in Trust, towards erecting a commodious Building for the use of the said Charity." It was agreed to take Mr. Lee's opinion upon the subject. The testator died two years after the date of the will, and Mr. Lee did not think the legacy was valid. He, however, advised that Counsel's opinion should be taken on the point. Mr. Blyth was appointed to wait upon Mrs. Baskerville relative to the legacy, and at a Special General Meeting, held July 6, he reported that he had received from her a very handsome and favourable answer; that she was very friendly disposed to the Charity, and expressed her persuasion that the legacy would be paid by the Executors according to the intention of her husband's will. Mr. Barker, however, gave his opinion that nothing Mrs. Baskerville could do would make the legacy valid, and that the Charity could only be served by a new act of her own. Another deputation was appointed to wait upon her on the subject, which she declined to see on the ground of indisposition, and peremptorily refused to adopt Mr. Barker's suggestion. The matter was allowed to rest for some time, but in October 1, 1788, it was again revived, when Mr. Maddocks gave his opinion that the Charity had no legal right; and at a meeting held

on the 6th of the same month the Governors passed a resolution giving up all legal claim to the legacy; the money, however, was afterwards paid to the Charity. Other large and undisputed legacies were also bequeathed to it; and we find that in 1787 Miss Addyes left £500, and in 1790 Miss Bayliss a like sum for the benefit of the Schools.

The Committee were busy for several years in looking out for more commodious premises, and in January, 1784, we find a minute to the effect that Bell Rope Croft was an eligible place for the School. No definite steps were taken until 1791, in which year the Governors bought a house in Park Street for £600. The admirable manner in which the funds of the Charity were managed is evident from the fact that the balance sheet for that year shows, after paying the amount of the purchase, no less a sum than £1,715 13s. 2½d. in hand. From the foundation of the school in 1760, until the year 1813, both boys and girls were admitted, but since the latter date it has been confined to girls only. In 1839 the admirable building in Graham Street, New Hall Hill, was erected, and taken possession of March 30, 1840. The architect was Mr. D. R. Hill, and the cost of the School was about £3,000. It is well suited for its purpose. The school room is large and healthy; the dormitories all that could be desired; the training excellent; the food ample and of good quality; and the recreation of the girls attended to. The present Secretary, the Rev. Samuel Bache, in 1854, wrote a very brief "Outline of the History and Plans of the School," from which we make the following extract. "The establishment is under the management of a Matron, who superintends the conduct of the 'large Family,' and a Governess, whose time is occupied in School duties. Sewing and knitting are taken in to be done by the girls, who make all their own clothes and perform the whole of the household work; no servant is kept, an assistant washer-woman being the only help that is ever employed: so that these 'poor Girls,' besides being well instructed in School, are taught, as far as is possible in such an Institution, the duties of domestic servants." It is only proper to add that the purpose of the School "has been carried out without the least regard to sectarianism or party distinctions among either its subscribers or its beneficiaries."

From the last report, dated January 28, 1867, we find that the number of girls then in the School was 32, and that the average number during the year had been 38. The number of applications made during 1866, for girls to enter respectable service had been about 66 ; and the balance at the Banker's was £22 1s. 3d. In 1860, when the School had existed a hundred years, a special fund was raised, called the "Centenary Fund," which realised £1,305 5s. od. for the Charity. And "in consideration of the importance of its objects, the equity of its rules, the liberality of its spirit, the benefits which it has already conferred on those who have been brought up in it, and on the community of which they have become members—in consideration also of the benefits which it is still adapted to confer," we are justified in saying that few institutions more thoroughly deserve "the support of the enlightened and benevolent friends of Education and of the Poor, of all religious denominations" than the Graham Street Protestant Dissenting Charity School.

CHAPTER III.—1761-1771.

§ I. APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

The period embraced in the present chapter is one of great interest and importance. Birmingham seems to have started into new life, and to have been most active in good works. In this decade the General Hospital—still one of our noblest charities—was founded; the first of our Musical Festivals was held; the Birmingham Canal Navigation was commenced; the Act for Lighting and Cleaning the Town was obtained; the first Circulating Library was opened, and other admirable labours were undertaken. The evidences of increased activity are very numerous. Newly-built houses—still with gardens for the most part—are continually advertised; and land, either to be let or sold on building leases, is frequently announced. Large quantities of bricks, numbering in some instances 100,000, are offered for sale. In many ways we obtain proof of an increasing population, of increasing wealth, and with the increase of wealth its certain accompaniments, an increase in the public spirit and the Christian charity of the people. We proceed to select such announcements as afford illustrations of the growing change in the appearance of the town. There is no necessity to connect these advertisements together by any comment. They tell their own story; and, as will be seen, they refer to almost every part of Birmingham. Many of them testify to the growing activity of the people, and the gradual encroachment of the town on the country. To our mind these are among the most interesting of the old advertisements, and we have made rather a numerous, but still a sort of representative selection. The first is dated July 19, 1762.

To be Sold to the best Bidder, On Friday the 23rd of July Instant, between the Hours of Three and Five o'Clock in the Afternoon of the same Day, at the House of Joseph Cooke, known by the Sign of the Golden Coffee-Pot, in the Cherry-Orchard, in Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, Two Leasehold Messuages or Tenements, with *the Shops, Gardens, and Appurtenances* thereunto belonging, situate in Temple-Street, in Birmingham aforesaid, in the Occupation of Mr. John Gisborn and Mr. Walter Adams, and set at the yearly Rent of 19*l.* 10*s.*

August 30, 1762.—To be Lett, and entered on at Michaelmas next, A Dwelling-House, Stable, Malt House, and other Out-Buildings, and an entire Backside, situate on Snow Hill, otherwise *Sandy Lane* in Birmingham, nearly opposite to the Town Machine.

March 28, 1763.—To be Lett Part of a Dwelling House *pleasantly situated* in Livery Street, Birmingham, with Household Goods.

April 25, 1763.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, All that Farm in Bordesley, in the Parish of Aston, called Silvester's Farm, near the Golden Hillock, and late in the Tenure of Benjamin Groves, *containing 61 Acres, lying within about a Mile of the Town of Birmingham*, and between the Stratford and Coventry Turnpike Roads. For further particulars enquire of John Taylor, Esq., of Birmingham; or of Mr. Tomlinson, at Aston.

The following advertisement gives a good description of the appearance of Duddeston Hall at this period :—

May 23, 1763.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately DUDDESTON HALL commonly called VAUX HALL, near Birmingham in the County of Warwick, being a large commodious House, with necessary Out-Buildings, and a large genteel Pleasure-Garden, neatly laid out and planted, with a large Bowling-Green; it lies within Half a Mile of Birmingham, and greatly resorted to by the Inhabitants thereof, as well as from other places, being used in the public Way, and in the Summer Season is a Concert every other week. There is a Close Cock Pit. The Place is well known to most Travellers. The present Possessor having no Wife or Family has a mind to retire from Business, therefore any Person desirous of taking the Place, may apply to Andrew Butter, of Duddeston Hall, aforesaid.

June 6, 1763.—To be Lett, and entered upon at Midsummer next, a Good Messuage, known by the Name or Sign of the Salutation, at the Bottom of Snow Hill, Birmingham, with *good Gardens, two Bowling Greens*, and other Conveniences thereto belonging, now in the Tenure of Thomas Cotton. For particulars enquire of Mr. John Kempson, of Birmingham aforesaid.

The first mention we find of the famous Old Crown House is on June 13, 1763, and then, we regret to add, it is in connection with the barbarious sport of cock-fighting.

Birmingham, June 25, 1763.—John Hawkes, at the Old Crown in Deritend begs Leave to acquaint his Friends, that his Annual Meeting will be held at his House on Friday and that the favour of their Company will be gratefully acknowledged by their most humble Servant,

JOHN HAWKES.

N.B. There will be a Subscription on Cocking as usual, and he hopes that those Gentlemen who intend to favour him with a Cock will please to send him there by 11 o'clock to be weighed.

October 24, 1763.

Birmingham, October 22, 1763.—Whereas on or about the 18th of this Instant, *several young Elm Trees were maliciously broke and destroyed in the Night time at New Hall*, in the Parish of Birmingham: Whoever will give Information of the Person or Persons concern'd in destroying the said Trees, so that they may be convicted of the same,

shall receive Five Guineas Reward, by applying to Mr. John Wheeler, Attorney, in Birmingham, or at New Hall.

February 13, 1764.—To be Sold in Parcels for Building on, *Several Closes of Land*, lying on the Eastward side of Walmer-Lane, at Birmingham, either in Fee Simple, subject to an annual Rent, or in Fee Simple, and without being subject to any Rent, as Persons may be inclined to Purchase.

Note, A Plan of the several intended Streets, with the respective Prices may be had, by enquiring of Mr. Richard Woodward, Attorney at Law, in Birmingham aforesaid, or of Humphrey Vale, Bricklayer, in Bordesley.

April 30th, 1764.—To be Lett, and enter'd upon immediately, a Large commodious House, neatly finished, situate in New-Hall-Walk, Birmingham, and fronting Charles-Street; consisting of a Hall, two Parlours, Kitchen, and Pantry, on the first Floor, with two Flights of good Lodging Rooms; good Cellars, a Back Kitchen, with a Pump of fine Soft Water at the Door, two Necessaries, a Three-Stall Stable, *and Garden* which opens into Edmund Street, with Ground to build either a large Warehouse or Coach-House. Enquire of Mr. E. W. Patteson.

The next two extracts are of considerable importance. Any one looking at Westley's Plan of Birmingham taken in 1731, will see that the New Hall is situated in the midst of very large and pleasantly located grounds of a park-like character. The grounds are well timbered, contain three good pools, and occupy that large piece of land bounded by Congreve Street, Ann Street, Colmore Row, Monmouth Street (then called New Hall Lane), and Snow Hill, and stretched away to where New Hall Hill and Frederick Street now are. The extent of this beautiful suburb will be understood if we mention that New Hall Street, Church Street, Livery Street, and all the branch streets connecting these main thoroughfares and the houses therein contained are now on the New Hall grounds. It appears by the following advertisement that there was a foot-way through the grounds, and that in 1764 an action was tried between Mr. Holloway the then tenant of the New Hall, and the Inhabitants of Birmingham, as to the right of the former to stop up the footpath. On May 14, 1764, this notice appeared :—

New-Hall, May 10, 1764.—As the Gate in New Hall Walk will be shut next Week, and it is impossible to know every Gentleman or Lady who would wish to have a Key for their Convenience, such Gentlemen and Ladies are desired to be so good to send to Mr. Holloway, who has orders to deliver Keys for their Service.

CHARLES COLMORE.

The next advertisement gives the result of the trial, and the manner in which the people respected the verdict. It is, however, a most

remarkable fact that no account is given in the *Gazette* either of the trial, or the riot, except that contained in the advertisement. But for this notice we should have no record of one of the most noteworthy events of the year 1764.

May 21, 1764.—Whereas upon a trial at the last Warwick Assizes between Mr. George Holloway and the Inhabitants of Birmingham, relative to a Foot Way thro' New Hall Grounds, a Verdict was given for Mr. Holloway, who did, on Saturday last, erect a gate to obstruct passing over the said Road, which was broke down by a great number of rude People; the gentlemen who disputed Mr. Holloway's Right to erect such Obstructions (as many substantial Proofs have arisen in Favour of the Public since the late Trial) are determined to try the right of the said Road over again, do hereby declare their utter detestation of such riotous Proceedings, and offer a Reward of Five Guineas to any one who will discover the Person or Persons that encouraged and promoted the breaking the said Gate in so riotous a manner, being determined to suppress any such illegal Proceedings, such Reward to be paid by their attorney John Clay Hallen, on Conviction of one or more of the said Rioters. Sign'd by George Middleton and Thomas Bingham, on Behalf of themselves and the rest of the Gentlemen concern'd.

GEORGE MIDDLETON.

THOMAS BINGHAM.

Birmingham, May 20, 1764.

N.B.—Here under is a Copy of a Letter several of the Gentlemen signed and sent to Mr. Holloway the Evening after the Violence was committed.

“Birmingham, May 19th, 1764.

“Mr. George Holloway,

“Sir,—We are very much concerned at the riotous Proceedings of this Day; and have such an Abhorrence to Practices of this Kind, that we will gladly join you in discovering and punishing the Offenders in this or any future illegal Outrage that concerns the Road in Question.”

We hear nothing more of the second trial threatened in the above advertisement; but suppose that it did not come off, or if it did that it was lost, for the foot-path was closed.

On May 28, 1764, we have this notice of a brook which has now passed away, and like its famous contemporary, Pudding Brook, is among the things that were.

By long Experience it has been proved that the Tolls collected between the Collieries and this Town are insufficient to keep the Roads in Repair, and it appears that one grand Obstacle to the Carriage of Coals on that Road has been the Sands or Ice at Hockley-Brook, and the Ascents therefrom; a Subscription is therefore proposed, in order to raise a Sum of Money, to be applied towards erecting a Bridge over the said Brook, and lowering the Hills on each Side.

June 4th, 1764.—To be Lett, near the Sand Pits, Birmingham, a Very good Pasture for Cows and Horses. Enquire of the Printers.

It sounds strangely to us now to hear the top of Deritend called "Near Birmingham;" yet in the following and many other advertisements, these words occur.

June 11, 1764.—To be Sold to the best Bidder, at the Dolphin Inn in Birmingham, on Friday the 22nd Day of June Instant, at Five of the Clock in the Afternoon, according to such conditions as shall then be produced, A Good Substantial Freehold Dwelling House with a Back Kitchen, and Chamber over the same, a Brewhouse, Stabling for five Horses, and a good Garden thereto belonging, situate at the Top of Deritend, near Birmingham aforesaid, for several years past 'till lately used as a Public House, and known as the Sign of the George, and now in the Possession of Mrs. Sarah Hawkes, Widow.

For further particulars enquire of Mr. Hallen, Attorney, Birmingham.

Land was being let for building in various parts of the town :—

October 15, 1764.—To be Lett, for Building, All the Land unbuilt upon lying on the West Side of Snow-Hill, Birmingham; also all the Land lying on the North Side of Holloway Head, Birmingham, opposite to a Row of Buildings called Exeter Row.

For further Particulars enquire of Mr. Mainwaring, Attorney, in Birmingham.

February 18, 1765.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, For Building upon, for the Term of two Thousand Years, A Piece of Ground, situate on the Westward Side of Walmer Lane in Birmingham. A Plan of the Land and Streets, and Account of the Price, may be had of James Day, in Birmingham.

Also to be let in Small Gardens, Part of the long Piece, situate on the South Side of Holloway-Head at 2s. 10d. per Rod. It is proposed that there shall be two Rows of Gardens, with a Walk nine Feet wide between them. Enquire of James Day aforesaid.

March 4, 1765.—To be Sold The Remaining part of a Lease, in which there is about 80 years to come, and may be entered upon at Michaelmas next, if required, a good genteel substantial and convenient House, situated in Aston Street, in Birmingham, containing a large Kitchen, two Parlours, and a Hall, wainscotted, a large Back Kitchen, with four Upper Rooms on a Floor, neatly fitted up with proper Hangings, &c. with Vaults, &c., under all the said Building, with *Shopping in which 200 Pair of Hands may be employed, with a good Warehouse joining to the same, a good Four Stall Stable, all in good Repair, with a large Garden planted with all Sorts of Wall and Standard Fruit Trees, with a Summer House at the Top of the Garden, all walled in and entire*; Also a Piece of Land joining to the said Garden, containing upwards of 40 Yards to the Front of Aston Street, and about 60 yards deep, on which great Improvements will be made by building thereon; this Land will be sold separate from the Building, if required.

March 25, 1765.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, A Handsome large commodious House, situated in Edgbaston-street, Birmingham, and late in the Occupation of Mrs. Elizabeth Blackham, deceased, consisting of a large Warehouse, with a Counting-House behind it, two good Parlours, a Hall, two Stair Cases, a China Pantry, three large Chambers, each having light and dark Closet, many of each of them large enough to hold a Bed, a spacious Dining Room wainscotted, six good Upper-Chambers with Closets, a Kitchen, Pantry, four large Cellars, in one of which there is a Pump, a Brewhouse with a Pump, and an Oven to bake Bread, a good Stable, with large Loft over it, a Coach-House, a large Garden, with a Canal, and other Conveniences thereto belonging.

N.B.—The Parlours and Chambers on the First Floor are all hung and wainscotted, and are neatly fitted up with Marble and Stone Hearths and Chimney Pieces and Brass Locks on the Doors. For further Particulars apply to Mrs. Anna Blackham, or to Mr. Charles Blackham, Attorney at Law, both in Edgbaston Street, Birmingham.

April 7, 1766.—To be disposed of About 120,000 of Bricks, now lying on a Piece of Land at Walmer Lane; which Land will be Sold in Fee-Simple, for building on, in large or small Parcels. Apply to Mr. Woodward, Attorney, in Birmingham aforesaid.

Note, in the said Land, is Clay, Sand, and Soft Water.

July 14, 1766.—Birmingham. July 5, 1766.—To be Sold, Together or Separately, for the remainder of a Term for 99 years, 98 of which were unexpired at Lady-Day Last, Twelve New-built Houses, situate in Lovely*Street, leading out of Steel-House Lane, now let at the Yearly Rent of £70, all well tenanted, and pleasantly situated, with a Yard entire, good soft-Water, and Gardening to each House, free from Ground Rent. For further Particulars enquire of Mr. Norman Mabbank, opposite Moat-Lane, in Digbeth, who will shew the same.

Oct. 6th, 1766.—To be Sold A very good Garden and a Neat Summer House, near Pudding Brook, in Birmingham. The Purchase will be about Ten Guineas. Enquire of the Printers of this Paper.

N.B.—Wanted an Apprentice to a good Trade, Some Money will be required.

Pudding Brook, which crossed Bradford Street, belongs to the past. Hutton mentions it and points out a peculiarity in its motion. He says, "Near the place where the small rivulet discharges itself into the moat, another, the same size, is carried over it, and proceeds from the town as this advances towards it, producing a curiosity seldom met with; one stream running south and the other north, for half a mile, yet only a path-road of three feet asunder. This surprised Brindley, the famous engineer."†

Here we interpolate a very curious advertisement, which strikingly illustrates the change which a century has produced in the town. In this year land was actually offered for nothing to any one who, under certain conditions, would build upon it. We are not, be it remembered, speaking of a newly-discovered country "beyond the seas," but of a street called Bradford Street, in the town of Birmingham. It reads like a fable, but it is, nevertheless, indubitably true.

August 3, 1767.

TO BE GIVEN GRATIS.

Some Fee Land, pleasantly situated for building on in Bradford Street, Deritend, to any person that will build upon the said land, and carry on a considerable trade there. Enquire of Mr. John Horton, in Deritend, who will shew the same.

* Now Loveday Street.

† History of Birmingham, p. 272.

This practice of "giving a crab to catch an apple" was not uncommon about this period. Ten years earlier we find an advertisement of land at Bilston, which, for the reason stated in the advertisement, was to be given away. We suppose the long dash at the end stands for the word tax collector.

December 19, 1757.—For the encouragement of Trade and Industry, and the lessening of Luxury and Idleness. Land to be given away in the Liberty of Bilstone, for to build upon, which lies next the Great Road, and where Coals will be delivered at 2d. a Cwt. and which is neither Copyhold, nor under the Breath or Jurisdiction of a—————

By THOMAS TOMKYS, Gent.

September 12, 1768.—To be Lett, or Sold Immediately, a New-built House, situate opposite Mr. Baskerville's Gate, Birmingham, facing the two Roads, with two Rooms on a Floor, a Brewhouse, a Pump with fine soft Water, *a Garden wall'd round*, with necessary convenience, all entire. For further particulars enquire of Robert Masefield, Cabinet-Maker, in New Street, or Mr. William Hodgkiss, in Bull Street; or of Mr. Baskerville.

February 6, 1769.—To be Let, and entered upon at Lady-Day next, a convenient and commodious well-built House, situate in Digbeth-street, Birmingham, with three Rooms on a Floor, and four large Ware-Rooms adjoining over a broad Gateway with Trap-Doors to let down Goods into a Cart, &c. very convenient for a Factor, the Ware-Rooms having a Communication with the House, and a private Stair-Case; also good Cellaring, Brew-house and Pump, &c. *in an entire Court-Yard, and a pleasant Garden adjoining to the Fields.* Likewise (if required) good shopping for twenty Pair of Hands in the Toy Way. For further Particulars enquire of Mrs. Jeffreys, at the House.

London Prentice Street is not a pleasant place to live in now, but in the year 1769 it contained such a desirable residence as the one advertised for sale on the 16th of March.

March 13, 1769.—To be Sold to the best Bidder, on Thursday the 16th Day of March next, at Stevenson's Coffee-House, in Edgbaston-Street, Birmingham, the Sale to begin at Two of the Clock in the Afternoon, and subject to such Conditions as shall be then produced, All that Freehold Messuage or Tenement, *with a large Garden thereto belonging and adjoining, containing about thirty yards in Depth, and four yards in Breadth, walled round*, with a right to the Well there: which said Premises are situate on the South side of a certain Street, *called London Prentice-Street*, in Birmingham aforesaid, and now in the Occupation of Matthew Bradeley. Further Particulars may be had of Mr. Sawyer, in Edmund Street, in Birmingham aforesaid, or of Mr. Whately, Attorney, in Walsall.

May 8th, 1769.—To be Let, a large handsome well-built Messuage or Dwelling-House situate in Park-Street, Birmingham, now in the Possession of Mr. Priest, being four Stories high, containing four Rooms on a Floor, and three Cellars one of which is arched, with a Cold-Bath therein, constantly filled by Springs of Water, and continually discharging itself from the Top, through Gutters or Sewers into the Fields; also a Yard, Lead Pump with good Water, a Stable and Brewhouse, Rooms over the same, and other Conveniences, all entire, *with a large Garden walled round, planted with some Fruit Trees, and a Summer-*



SOUTH EAST VIEW OF THE MOAT.

Sketch taken April 2^d 1814 by the late William Hamper, Esq.
now in possession of Thomas Aver, Esq.

House therein, two Stories high, adjoining to the Fields. Two Pieces of Land near Birmingham, well watered, with a Barn thereon, all in good Repair, will be Let with the above Premises if required. For Particulars enquire at the said House.

The next advertisement carries us back to the time when the Moat-house really corresponded to its name, and was "moated all round." It affords a vivid picture of the change which has taken place in that part of the town now occupied by Smithfield Cattle Market.

January 4th, 1768.—To be Let, and entered on at Lady-Day next, for the Term of 21 Years, or longer if required, All that Messuage or Tenement, commonly called the Moat-House, containing four Rooms on a Floor, and being three Stories high, with a large back Kitchen thereto adjoining, and convenient Warehouses, Shopping, and other Buildings contiguous thereto, situate in the Moat-Yard, in Birmingham, and late in the Occupation of Mr. Thomas Abney. The Premises are moated, all round, and are very fit and convenient for carrying on a large Manufactory, there being Buildings which, at a small Expence, may be converted into Work-Shops capable of employing 300 Workmen. For Particulars enquire of Mr. Joseph Webster, in Digbeth, Birmingham.

October 31st, 1768.—To be Let, all that Messuage and Tenement, situate in Camp-Hill, known by the Sign of the Bull's Head, in the Manor of Bordesley, near Birmingham, now in the Possession of the Widow Smallwood, who has occupied the same upwards of 40 Years, consisting of two Front Houses, *four Gardens, rising one above another, three of them walled round and well stocked with Fruit Trees.* The Situation is pleasant and very convenient for an Inn or Private Family, and any Alteration or Improvement required will be made for a prudent and deserving Tenant, there being very good Conveniences for Shopping. For Particulars apply to the Printers of this Paper.

Almost every house having a garden attached to it, garden-robbing was sure to be a crime of frequent occurrence. We quote one example of the advertisements which appear on this subject.

Birmingham, February 4, 1770.—Whereas last Night or early this Morning, a Garden in Hangman's Lane, belonging to Mr. Henry Wiggins, junior, was robbed of a considerable Quantity of Plants, Greens, &c., and other damages done, if any one will discover the Offender or Offenders so that they may be brought to justice, shall receive Three Guineas Reward: It appears by the Quantity of Stuff taken, that more than one were concern'd; if any one will impeach his Accomplice or Accomplices, they shall be entitled to the above Reward, and Means used for a Pardon.

N.B.—From the many repeated Damages done to that and the Gardens adjacent, the Owners thereof are resolved for the future to plant Steel Traps therein, therefore all who shall presume to Trespass for the future, are required to take Notice.

The frequency of these robberies led the owners of gardens to combine for the detection and prosecution of the thieves. A large number signed the following:—

May 28, 1770.—We whose Names are hereunto subscribed, being Owners and Occupiers of Gardens near the Town of Birmingham, hereby give Notice that we have entered into an Agreement to prosecute all such Person or Persons who shall hereafter be discovered or detected to be concerned in, or guilty of robbing, spoiling, or destroying any Garden or Garden Grounds belonging to us or any of us. And we do hereby promise to pay any Person or Persons, who shall hereafter discover the Party or Parties guilty of or concerned in committing any such Robbery, the Sum of Five Guineas for a Reward, to be paid on the Conviction of the Party or Parties so offending.

April 30, 1770.—To be Let and entered upon immediately, a convenient Dwelling House, which may if agreeable to the Tenant, be used as two Tenements, well situated for a Retail Business, at *the Bottom of the Steps leading out of the Old Church Yard, into Digbeth*, Birmingham; a Part whereof was lately occupied by Mr. Kettle, Peruke-maker.

The above advertisement refers to a time when St. Martin's Church was surrounded by shops, the backs of which looked in the church-yard. Several persons are now living who remember those shops and the steps leading out of the church-yard into Digbeth. A relative of my own lived in one of these houses, and her description of the place will be given in due time. The next advertisement tells us of the increased growth of the town. It also reveals a very curious method of getting information on the subject; a survey would have been much more satisfactory, and more likely to have led to a reliable result. Its vague indefiniteness is charming:—

Birmingham, August 13, 1770.—Any Person well acquainted with the additional new Buildings erected in this Town since the year 1751, and capable of inserting them into the Plan of Birmingham, are desired to send their Terms sealed in a Letter directed to T. J. to the Printer of this Paper, where may be seen a Specimen of Part of the Plan already done.

October 7, 1770.—To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, a large Double House, with large and convenient Shops, *and a Garden, all Entire, situate in Lichfield Street*, Birmingham. Enquire of Mr. Wm. Walsingham, in the Bull Ring.

In an advertisement which appears on the 22nd of October, of this year, there is a long list of sales from which one or two lots may well be selected.

Lot 1.—A Lease for the Remainder of a Term of 40 years, 33 of which were to come and unexpired at Midsummer last. of all that Messuage or Tenement situate in *Temple Street* in Birmingham aforesaid, together with the *Offices, Stable, Coach-house, Garden, and two small Crofts to the said Messuage or Tenement, belonging to* and being behind the same, late in the Possession of Mr. Hallen, Attorney at Law, deceased. The Rent reserved upon the Lease 35*l.* per Annum.

Lot 6.—Two Dwelling-Houses, with a *Stable and Garden belonging to one of them, situate in Spicall-Street* in Birmingham, now in the respective Occupation of Mr. Jos.

Sheldon and Benj. Fincher ; and under a Lease granted to Mr. Sheldon, of which there are nine years to come on the 20th of December next, at the yearly rent of 22*l.* 5*s.*

Lot 8.—A Dwelling House in Edgbaston-Street aforesaid with a *Stable and Garden* thereunto belonging, now let to Mr. John Miles as Tenant at Will, at the yearly Rent of 16*l.*

December 1770.—To be Let, and entered on at Christmas, A good brick House, with five rooms on a Floor, three Stories high, *a Barn and Stables, a good Kitchen Garden, with a Fruit and Flower Garden, situated at Cooper's Mills, within ten minutes walk of the Market Place, Birmingham.* A good Family Seat and Servant's Seat, in Deritend Chappel, either with or without some grazing Land adjoining. Any Person this may suit may be treated with, by applying to Mr. Key, Mercer in Birmingham.

N.B.—A large Flint Mill Stone to be Sold.

The next advertisement shows how the town was encroaching on the country. On every side land was being let on building leases ; and the aspect of the place was rapidly changing.

May 20, 1771.—Land to be Let, Several Acres for a Term of 99 years, pleasantly situated in Bradford Street, Birmingham, for Building upon, at Three Farthings the square Yard. Enquire of Mr. John Horton in the aforesaid Street.

July 8, 1771.—To be Let, for the Remainder of a Term of 14 Years which will expire in June, 1780, A House, with Bow-Windows, in the Center of Paradise Row, Birmingham, consisting of 3 Rooms on the first and second Floor, besides a large Hall, and Handsome Staircase, with a spacious Landing-place, and 4 Rooms on the third Floor, with a Back Kitchen, Garden, and other Conveniences.

From these advertisements it will be seen how completely our town wore a country aspect. In almost every one of the streets then made the houses had gardens. Bull Street, High Street, Edgbaston Street, Park Street, New Street, Temple Street, Moor Street, the Square, Deritend, New Hall Street, Paradise Row, Exeter Row, and even London Prentice Street were thus favoured. It seems scarcely credible that in less than a hundred years all these have been swept away, nor left a rack behind ; and that the town which might then have been appropriately named the town of gardens, has since acquired the designation of smoky Birmingham. But so it is :

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

§ 2. PUBLIC LIFE AND EVENTS.

The public life of this decade was very active. Besides the great undertakings which distinguish it, and which we shall treat separately, it was marked by innumerable acts which manifest the energy and activity of the period. The advertisements and notices which we have selected afford us rich proofs of the growing wealth and intelligence of at least a portion of the inhabitants, and offer us another illustration of the fact that, with increased wealth and intelligence, the public spirit of a place will also increase. To read these evidences of the growth of the town, and of the industry and enterprise of its citizens, is like seeing our forefathers as they really were; to see them going about their daily work; and preparing the town for their successors who are now enjoying the fruits of the seed which was then sown. How rich the harvest is manifest by that fine contribution to the history of Industry, "Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District," so ably edited by Mr. S. Timmins. As will be seen many of the seeds were sown in the ten years between 1761 and 1771. The public life of the period opened and closed with public work.

January 11, 1762.—At a Meeting held at the Old-Cross on Monday last, it was agreed that the Expence of replacing the Militia should be paid out of the Poor's Rates; but Objections having since been made; is now ordered to be ballotted for according to Act of Parliament. The Constables have us'd their utmost Endeavours to get a true List of the Names of Persons to serve in the MILITIA; but if any should have escap'd their Notice, it is desired that such Names may be given in.

These notices of the Militia take us back to a time of war; when the Militia occupied a much more important position than it does at present. Our Volunteers have caused the older body to lose much of its ancient prestige. The reader will perhaps be astonished to learn that even at this period a substitute could be found for the insignificantly small sum of three shillings and sixpence. The following advertisement, however, certifies to the fact:—

January 11, 1762.—MILITIA INSURANCE OFFICE, at John Latham's, the Sign of the Bell in Bull-Street, Birmingham.

Whereas it is now thought improper by the Officers of the Town to raise Money by a Parish-Rate to Recruit the Militia, I do hereby offer, for the sum of Three Shillings and

Sixpence, paid to me any Time before the first Day of Balloting, to insure any Person in this Town from the Inconvenience, if the Lot should fall upon him, by providing a proper Substitute.

HENRY BROOKES, Serjeant,
Warwickshire.

And whereas Doubt may arise as to the Performance of my Engagement, Lieutenant Garret hath permitted me to say, he will satisfy any Gentleman who will please to speak to him upon the Subject.

Attendance will be given at the above Office from Eight of the Clock in the Morning until Ten at Night.

It is worthy of note, that although the people are the greatest sufferers by war, they always receive its declaration with joy. The briefest paragraph, published on January 18, 1762, shows how in this respect we have ever been the same. "On Thursday War was declared here against Spain, amidst the Acclamations of a large Concourse of People. The Militia of this Town attended on the Occasion." On June 24 of this year Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick obtained his victory over the French in the battle of Graebenstein. The news reached Birmingham on Saturday, July 3, when the bells were rung, and the account of the victory received with "other demonstrations of joy."

Here is a notice, not without its interest to many :—

The definite treaty of peace was signed at Paris on July 10, in this year, and on the 31st of March it was proclaimed in this town. May 5 was appointed for a general thanksgiving. It was celebrated in Birmingham in the usual manner; and at St. Bartholomew's Chapel was performed the late famous Mr. Henry Purcell's *Te Deum*. Jubilate, and Anthem; also the late Mr. Handel's celebrated Coronation Anthem: The Vocal Parts by a Society belonging to the Chapel, accompanied with Instruments by Gentlemen whose Abilities render'd the Performance compleat: The whole conducted by Mr. Richard Hobbs.

Birmingham, February 15, 1763.—Notice is hereby given That the Office for the Court of Requests is removed two doors below the Play-House in Peck-Lane.

It is to be hoped that the reasonable request of the following notice was complied with.

Birmingham, June 13, 1763.—Whereas it has been thought highly necessary to have the Names of those who have Seats or Sittings in the Old Church, in this town, transcribed into a New Book, the present one being very old and intricate in several places, some Leaves torn, many names transferred wrong to the second Part of the said Book, a great many have neglected to have their names renewed, and some Seats without any names belonging to them, which may prove of bad Consequence to the Owners, if not timely prevented. In order to put Things on a better Footing, there is a new Book in considerable forwardness, and every Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday,

for a few Weeks, between the Hours of 7 and 12 in the Forenoon, and 2 and 6 in the Afternoon, for Three-pence any person may peruse the old Book, and have their names inserted in their proper Places in the new one by applying to Thomas Juxon, at the Register Office in Bull Street.

By order of the Church Wardens.

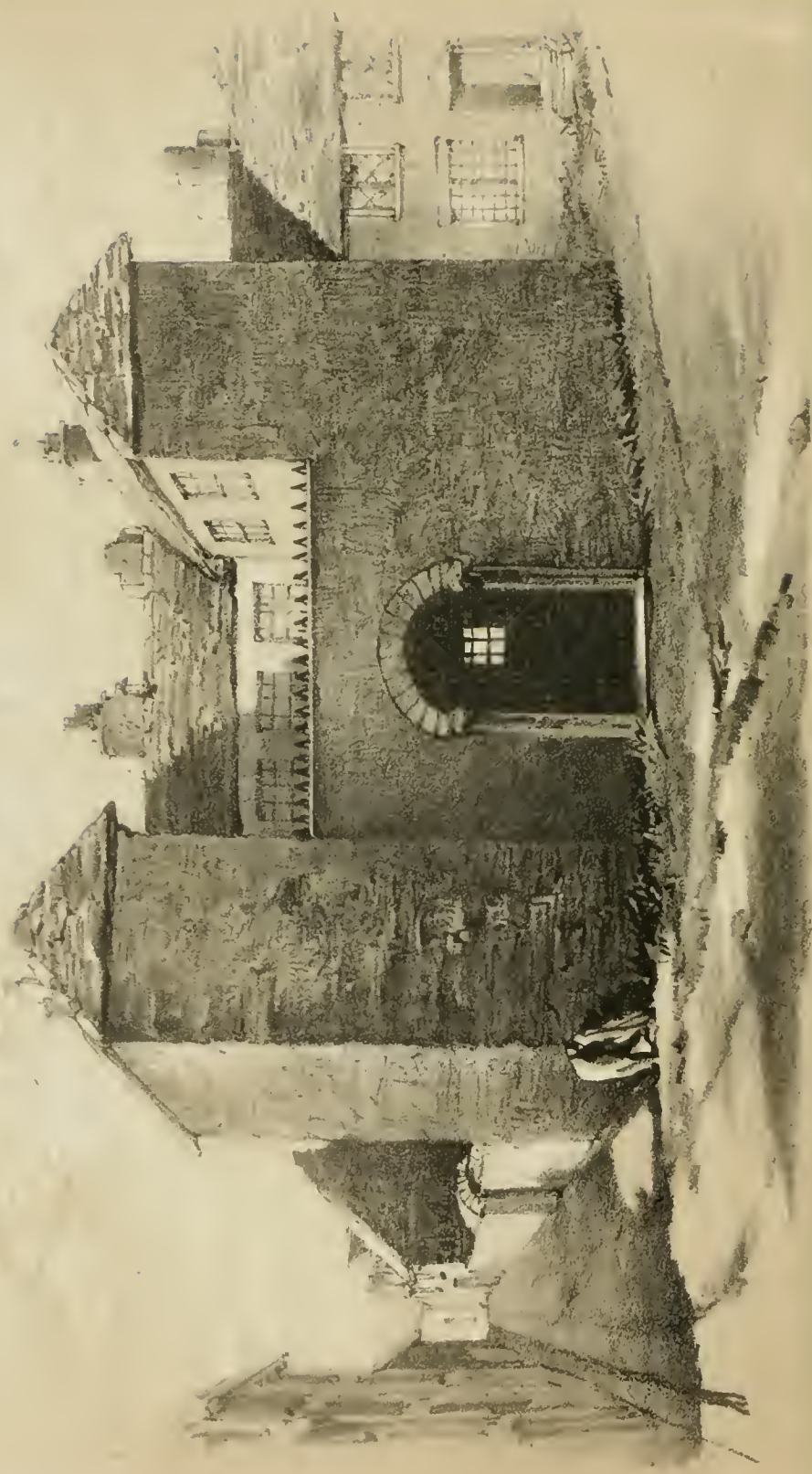
Fears about the loss of our trade are very old, and of wonderful vitality. Nothing seems more timorous or more adventurous and daring in turns than the spirit of trade and commerce. Our fathers were as anxious as ourselves on this subject; and 1866 was only repeating the conduct of 1763. Thus in October 10 of that year we read,—

Birmingham, October 6, 1763.—At a considerable Meeting of Manufacturers, held this evening, at Mr. Cook's, in the Cherry Orchard, it was their unanimous opinion, that the Trade and Manufacturers of Birmingham, and Places adjacent, are now in great danger of being monopolized unless the Manufacturers in general, immediately enter into, and vigorously exert, some proper measures for preventing the same. It was therefore resolved, that a second meeting be there held, on Thursday the 13th Instant, at Six in the Evening, for a further and more general Consultation; when it is hoped every one who has the Welfare of the Trade at Heart as well as the Manufacturers in Wolverhampton, Walsall, Bilson, &c., to take the same into their Consideration, in Order that a free Correspondence, and good Understanding, may be maintained thro' every Branch in the Hardware and Toy Trades.

We have no record of the result of this second meeting—in fact, for aught we know to the contrary, it might not have been held. Our next extract reveals a state of things of which in these days of rail-roads we can form but an indistinct idea, yet it was common enough in those times.

October 17, 1763.—Gentlemen and Tradesmen of Birmingham. Whereas the Carriers from this Town to London cannot carry so much by one third of the Weight as they aforetime have done upon the Account *of the Badness of the Roads*, and badness of Hay, and likewise such a Rise upon the Horse Corn, that the Carriage will not defray their Expenses, except there be an advance; which will be general withall from Monday, the 17th Instant of October, 1763.

Of the threefold reason assigned for this rise, the causes which produced two of them operated in a more disastrous manner on the state of the people. Hay was bad, and the price of horse corn was high; and so were the prices of provisions. The people suffered intensely, and food riots were common. The number of thieves, highway robbers, and footpads, increased to a most dangerous extent. The following notice applied to Birmingham as well as to other parts of the country.



View of Castle

From Sketch of Castle about 1800

October 24, 1763.—To the Acting Magistrates in the Country. Whereas a great number of Felons and Cheats, escaping Pursuit in London retire into the Country where they follow the same Practices; and frequently avoid Justice from their Characters not being known. And Whereas there are at present many Felons returned from Transportation who also hide themselves in the Country, Sir John Fielding requests for the sake of the Public Good, that Magistrates committing any such Offenders, or such as are Strangers in the Country where they are committed, to give him immediate Notice of such Commitment, with a Description of their Persons, as this Correspondence has already been the Means of bringing many notorious Offenders to Justice: If at any time Felons or Cheats fly from the Country to conceal themselves in London, on Notice of their being also sent to Sir John Fielding, with their Description and probable Connections, together with a Warrant for apprehending them, proper enquiries will be made by that Magistrate, and the most active Methods used to apprehend them, and when once this Correspondence becomes universal, it will render the escape of such Offenders very difficult if not impracticable.

These evils were increased by the heavy falls of rain and snow, which produced unexampled floods. On January 9, 1764, we read, "By the heavy Rains last Week, and sudden Melting of the Snow, there have been the greatest Floods ever known in these parts." And in the following week we learn that on Friday night, January 13, "We had again heavy Rain, which caused another Flood; and on Saturday Morning the rain was succeeded by a very high Wind, that continued several Hours, and has done considerable Damages in these Parts, by tearing up Trees by the Roots, stripping the Tiling, blowing down Chimnies, &c."

An important and noteworthy event is thus briefly mentioned on June 10, 1765:—"The Bank here of Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd and Co. was open'd on Monday last."

The following order, we anticipate, was not issued before it was needed. A little more stringent action in this matter would not be out of place at the present time.

July 29, 1765.—The Justices of the Peace have ordered the Officers of the Town to take up, and put in confinement, all Persons who are seen Fighting or Rioting in any Piece of Ground or other Parts of this Parish.

This is a very pleasing paragraph to read:—

August 5, 1765.—We hear that invaluable Discovery by the great Mr. Franklin, for securing Buildings from Lighting, will be prosecuted in this Town by Mr. John Wyatt (and Assistants) at a very trifling Expence, and that he is preparing a large Number of those Instruments, many of which are already bespoke.

The next notice tells us of a time when Aston Park was in all its glory.

September 9th, 1765.—Whereas several disorderly Persons of late, particularly in the Night-Time, have been seen in Sir Lister Holte's Park at Aston, and supposed with a Design to steel Deer or Rabbits therein, a Deer having been lately found in the said Park with its legs tied together, and the Keeper in attempting to apprehend them, hath been threatened to be beaten for interrupting them therein; *Notice is hereby given* that a Reward of Five Guineas will be given by Sir Lister Holte to any Person who will give Information of the Persons concerned in such unlawful Practices, so that they shall be convicted thereof, and all Persons who shall be found trespassing in the said Park for the future, under any pretence whatsoever, will be prosecuted with the utmost severity.

Aston Hall, September 9th, 1765.

L. HOLTE.

The Court of Requests did not remain long in Peck Lane, for in October the following notice appeared :—

Birmingham, October 7, 1765.

Notice is hereby given, That the Business of the Court of Requests for the Town of Birmingham, and Hamlet of Deritend, now carried on at the Office in Peck-Lane, will, after this Week be transacted in a new-built Office at the Upper-End of New-Street, where Attendance will be given on Mondays and Fridays only, from Nine in the Morning till Two in the Afternoon.

But now there was good news for Birmingham. The town was to be honoured with a royal visit. Remembering what we did when a royal Duke* visited us in 1857, we shall be astonished at the indifferent, mere matter of fact kind of way in which the expected coming of this royal personage was announced. On October 21, 1765, "we hear," says this briefer abstract and chronicle of the times than the players, "We hear that his Royal Highness the Duke of York will dine To-day in this Town and in the Evening there will be a Ball." The Duke came; and on the following Monday appeared this notice of the visit and the ball.

October 28, 1765.—On Monday last, between One and Two o'clock, his Royal Highness the Duke of York honour'd this Town with a Visit, and (after viewing the different Manufactories at John Taylor, Esqr's), dined at the Castle Inn. In the Evening there was a Public Ball at Mrs. Sawyer's Rooms in the Square. His Royal Highness opened the Ball with the Hon. Mrs. Archer, and danced Country Dances till near Eleven o'clock. There were present the Right Hon. Earl of Plymouth, Hon. Mr. Archer and his Lady, Sir Lister Holte and Lady, Sir Henry Bridgeman and Lady, Lady Gough, several of the neighbouring Gentry, and the principal Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town. Everything was conducted with Decorum, and his Royal Highness was pleased to express Satisfaction. After the Ball, his Royal Highness went to Castle-Bromwich Hall, the Seat of Sir Henry Bridgeman, near this Town, accompanied by the Earl of Plymouth, Hon. Mr. Archer and Lady &c. On Tuesday morning the Hounds went out, and his Royal Highness was in the Field with the Company, when they run three Hares but killed only one. His Royal Highness dined with Sir Henry, and in the Evening there was a splendid

* The Duke of Cambridge visited Birmingham to open Calthorpe Park, June 1, 1857.

Ball, at which were present the Gentry in the Neighbourhood. On Wednesday his Royal Highness set out for the Seat of James West, Esq. at Alscot, near Stratford-upon-Avon, in his Way to London.

Hutton records an incident connected with this visit, and quotes a short speech of his Royal Highness, which perhaps made up in truth for its lack of courtesy. "In 1750," says the historian, "we had two assembly rooms; one at No. 11, in the Square, the other No. 85, in Bull-street. This last was not much in use afterwards. That in the Square continued in repute till in the course of that evening which happened in October 1765, when Edward Duke of York had the honour of leading down the dance, and the ladies of Birmingham enjoyed that of the Duke's hand. He remarked, 'that a town of such magnitude as Birmingham, and adorned with so much beauty, deserved a superior accommodation; that the room itself was mean, but the entrance meaner.' Truth is ever the same, whether it comes from a prince or a peasant; but its effects are not. Whether some secret charm attended the Duke's expression that blasted the room is uncertain, but it never after had its former eminence."*

In the following year we were honoured with another royal visitor :—

January 6th, 1766.—On Thursday last, about Noon, his Serene Highness, the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick, attended by Baron Beare, Baron Tilk, Baron Dewits, Baron Deagulier, and Col. Boyde, arrived in this Town, and after viewing the different Manufactures, dined and lay at the Swan; and set out the next Day for London, thro' Coventry.

The relations of the English Government with America were producing their effects upon the Birmingham manufactures, and on December 23, 1765, this advertisement was inserted: from other sources we learn that they memorialised Parliament on the subject :—

The Merchants and Manufacturers interested in Commerce with AMERICA are desired to meet this Evening in the Castle Inn, at Seven o'clock, to consider of proper measures to represent the Inconveniences this Neighbourhood suffers from the want of Remittances, and the stop that is put to the sending of goods to America.

Our next extract is full of local information. It is curious to find the grievances of the poor competing with private enterprise, and appealing to the ratepayers to support them by patronising only the town machine.

* History of Birmingham, p. 213.

Vestry Room at the Workhouse, January 17th, 1766.—The Overseers of the Poor think it their Duty, to inform the Inhabitants of Birmingham, that in Consequence of a Machine being erected at Handsworth for weighing Coals, the Profits of the Town Machine have been greatly diminished, and as there is Reason to apprehend that another Machine will be fixed on Snow Hill, in direct Opposition to that of the Town, by which Means a very considerable annual Supply will be cut off from the Poor, and, in Proportion to the Loss, the Levies must be increased to make up the Deficiency, it is therefore earnestly recommended to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, that they will purchase no Coals but what are weighed at the Town Machine, certified by a proper Ticket ; And the following Reasons, in Favour of this Address are submitted to their Consideration. The Profits arising from the Town Machine are appropriated to the Use of the Poor, and of Course serve to lessen the Levies, therefore it is the Interest of every Individual to encourage the Scheme, which, without oppressing any one, tends to relieve the whole.

It is unreasonable that any private Interest should prevail over a public Good, and a public Charity, or that the Poor should be deprived of any Part of their Support, or the Community be subjected to an additional Tax by encouraging the selfish views of those who mean to put into their own Pockets the Sums now raised for the Support of the Poor by the Town Machine, which has hitherto been very successful for that Purpose, and very fairly conducted.

That the setting up of private Machines, for weighing Coals, and the keeping of large Coal Yards by Particular Persons, will be of very bad Consequence, by putting it in the Power of the Proprietors to raise the Price of that Commodity ; and not only so, but the Purchasers will be more liable to Impositions in respect to the Weight, by the Distance from Handsworth and by the Frauds of the Coal Heavers.

That from a true State of the Case, the Result of the Question being plainly this,—Whether the Profits arising from weighing of Coals should be applied to the Relief of the Poor, and consequently of the Levies, or whether they should be engrossed by some few Individuals? It is hoped that every Person in Birmingham will give the Preference to the Public Good, and to his own Interest, and as an Act of Charity, as well as Convenience, take the Resolution of purchasing no Coals, but what are weighed at the Town Machine. This Determination, unanimously observed, will secure a considerable annual Income for the Poor and defeat the pernicious Schemes of all those who aim to enrich themselves by distressing the Levies.

The following extract may be given without comment :—

March 10th, 1766.—Wednesday last the Rev. Mr. Brailsford, M.A., was chosen Head-Master of the Free Grammar School in this Town, vacant by the Death of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Green.

The high price of provisions and the badness of trade were producing their effects upon the conduct of the people. Farmers coming to market were molested, robbed, and treated with violence. Attempts were made by the mob to regulate the price at which provisions should be sold. The authorities of Birmingham took the matter in hand, and prepared to assert the authority of the law. In October the following notice appeared :—

Birmingham, October 4, 1766.—In order to protect Farmers and Others coming to this Market from being molested, the following Persons are appointed Constables, to preserve the Peace, and conduct them safely into the Market, viz. :

William Beck	Thomas Pinks	Thomas Green
Abraham Dutton	Henry Vickers	Richard Moore
Richard Adcock	William Johnson	William Steen
Edward Price	John Hawkes	William Phillips
Charles Jennens	Joseph Thorley	James Lees
Henry Read	Clement Tibbats	Joseph Roades
William Hodgkinson	James Fielding	William Dunn
Thomas Randall	Thomas Bellamy	
Thomas Smyth	John Cheston	

N.B. It is therefore hoped every Person will bring their Butter, Fowls, &c. into the Public Market, and not dispose of them privately.

They did better, however, than apply the law only. This, it is evident by the next extract, they did effectually ; but after suppressing the disorders, they proceeded to relieve the sufferings which had caused them. Charity went hand in hand with law and proved the most effective weapon.

October 6, 1766.—The Disturbance that was called by the disorderly Persons who assembled in this Town on Monday, the Fair Day, under a Pretence of regulating the price of Provisions, is now totally suppressed, by the Care and Vigilance of John Wyrley, Esq. ; whose Zeal for the Welfare of this Place we have long experienced.—A Subscription for the Relief of the more distressed Poor has been entered into by several of the principal Inhabitants, for supplying them with Six Pounds of Bread for Sixpence till the Price of Corn shall enable the Bakers to furnish them with Bread on the same Terms. Advertisements have been circulated through the neighbouring Country, to encourage the Farmers to bring Provisions into our Markets, on a full assurance, that their Persons and Properties will be protected from any Injury. The Poor Inhabitants seem thoroughly convinced of the Humanity and Tenderness that have been shown to them, and are fully satisfied, that nothing can conduce so much to their real Advantage, as that the Business of the Markets should be transacted without any Interruption.

The rumours of the people's violence had lost nothing by carrying. London must have had a strange idea of our artizans and mechanics, as will be seen by the following little paragraph :—

Birmingham, October 13.—The Accounts in the London Papers of a Mob or Gang, with Iron Caps, going from this Town to Stratford is entirely false, the People here being very quiet and peaceable.

Another severe winter added to the distresses of the people. On January 12, 1767, we read :—

The Roads are very bad, occasioned by the great Fall of Snow, which has much retarded the Posts. The London Mail, which usually comes in here about Seven in the

Morning, did not arrive till Six o'clock last Friday Evening. It is said the Horse was found with the Mail on the Hills near Chipping-Norton, but without the Rider.

And again on the 19th:—

The Fall of Snow is greater in this Neighbourhood than has been known for many Years, and the Wind has blown it in such Drifts, that the Pits, Lanes, and Holloways are filled up, and are level with the higher Grounds, which renders travelling extremely dangerous.

The well-to-do inhabitants of this town again set to work to meet the emergency. It is pleasant to find that the town was then, as now, distinguished by the true spirit of charity and practical benevolence. In March, 1767, we read:—

A Subscription is on Foot among the principal Inhabitants of this Town, and upwards of 70*l.* is already subscribed in order to raise a Sum of Money to be distributed among the poor Inhabitants who do not receive Pay from the Parish.

In the following week this notice appeared:—

March 16, 1767.—The Collection for the Support of the poor Inhabitants of this Town, who do not receive pay from the Parish, amounts to upwards of 240*l.*, and a Meeting of the Subscribers is desired at Mr. Barber's, at the Swan, on Wednesday next, at Six o'clock in the Evening, to consult upon a proper Method of disposing of the Money.

And again on the 23rd:—

The Subscription for the Relief of the necessitous Poor of this Town, amounts to near Three Hundred Pounds, and the Sum subscribed will be disposed of to a Number of Objects, at the Discretion of the Subscribers, in Proportion to every Person's Subscription, on a Day of which Notice will be given; and we hear that a more considerable Sum will be immediately raised, for the Purchase of large Quantities of Meal and Corn, to be again Sold out at moderate Prices to the Poor.

In June the same subject is thus brought before the public:—

June 29, 1767.—For the Relief of the Poor.—As the present Dearthness of all Kinds of Provisions renders the necessities of the Poor truly pitiable, it must undoubtedly fill every generous Breast with an ardent Desire to contribute to their Relief, and as the encouraging the Use of Rice is not only found to answer a good Purpose, by supplying the Poor with a cheap and hearty Food, but must also greatly contribute to reduce the Price of other Provisions, it is hoped the laudable Example set by a worthy Gentleman (who has generously given the Carriage from London of Five Tons of Rice, and One Ton of Pickled Pork for the Benefit of the distressed Poor,) will be thought worthy of Imitation, as they are by that means supplied with the best of Rice for Three Halfpence per Pound, and exceeding good Pork at Threepence per Pound, which is the Price each cost in London. If the Humane and Benevolent will contribute to the raising of a Fund for paying the Carriage of Rice, so that the Poor may be supplied at its first Cost, the Gentleman that has set the Example, will think himself greatly honoured, and the Poor in general must be greatly benefitted. A Book is opened at Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co. for receiving Subscriptions for this charitable Undertaking, and the Management of



THE POST OFFICE, NEW ST.

Taken from a Sketch about 1820

the Money will be left to the principal Subscribers. In the Disposal of the above Gentleman's Charity, it has been determined (for Want of a greater Quantity) that no one shall have more than Two Pounds of Rice in one Day, to the Intent that each poor Person may have a little, for though by that Method half a Ton per Day, twice a week, has been disposed of, it has been found that great numbers were obliged to go away without any ; and in order that the real Poor alone shall receive the Benefit of this Charity, it is determined that all Hucksters, or others, whose circumstances render them unworthy of such a Charity, that shall be found applying for any of this Rice, shall be exposed by name in the Public Papers.

The good effects of these measures are evident from the fact that while riots were occurring in almost all other places in the neighbourhood, the people of Birmingham were quiet and peaceable.

Our next series of extracts relate to the Post Office, and need no connecting links.

September 21, 1767.—Mrs. Gunn, takes this Method to inform the Public, that she shall remove the Post-Office from the House she now lives in in New Street, to her new-built House, the Upper-end of Peck-Lane, on Wednesday the 30th Instant.

October 5th, 1767.—Mrs. Gunn takes this Method to inform the Public that she has removed the Post-Office from the House she lived in in New Street, to her new-built House, the Upper-end of Peck-Lane.

January 2nd, 1769.—Post Office, Birmingham.—His Majesty's Post Master General having ordered a Post six Days in every Week between Birmingham and the Towns of Dudley, Hales-Owen, Stourbridge, Kidderminster, and Bewdley, Notice is hereby given, That after the 5th Instant, all Letters put in at this Office, for these Towns, or their Neighbourhood, before Ten o'Clock at Night, on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, will be forwarded by the Mail on the Mornings following, and the Letters from these Towns for Birmingham, will be delivered out every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Mornings, as early as the Business of the Office will permit.

The Letters also from Worcester, and Places beyond it, in the great Cross Road, or its Branches, will be delivered out at the same Time every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Mornings ; and their Answers, or such other Letters as are to be sent to that Country, must be put in at this Office before Ten o'Clock on those Nights ; as they will then be conveyed to and from Kidderminster, at the Expence of the Revenue, and the Messengers at present employ'd will be discontinued.

Great Numbers of Letters having hitherto been privately collected and delivered, as well in these Parts as in other Parts of the Kingdom, contrary to Law, to the great Prejudice of the Revenue of the Post Office ; Notice is likewise hereby given, that all Carriers, Coachmen, Watermen, Wherrymen, Dispensers of Country News Papers, and all other Persons whatsoever, hereafter detected in the illegal collecting, conveying, or delivering Letters, will be Prosecuted with the utmost Severity.

N.B.—The Penalty is Five Pounds for every Letter collected or delivered contrary to Law, and One Hundred Pounds for every Week this Practice is continued.

GEORGE HODGSON, Surveyor.

Among the notable schemes propounded during this period, it is no wonder that some were in advance of the age. Perhaps the most remarkable of these is one which appeared on January 16, 1769. It reads like a prophecy of what was to come.

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham.—A Scheme for supplying the Town of Birmingham with Soft Water, at a moderate annual Expence, to such Persons as may choose to have that Water, is now under Consideration; Besides conducting it into Kitchens for the Uses of Families, it is intended to contrive the Pipes in such a Manner, that it may flow into any Story of every House where it may be wanted. Many Conveniences must accrue from the Execution of this Design to private Families, and many more to Manufacturers, Brewers, Innkeepers, Fishmongers, &c. The Town will be in less danger from Fires, and it is hoped that such a Revenue, (together with a temporary Tax, and not a perpetual one) may be produced as may procure other Advantages to the Town, such as Lighting and Cleaning the Streets, removing Nuisances, &c.

This Scheme cannot be properly planned without some Knowledge of the Number of Persons who may desire to be accommodated with Water in this Manner, and of the Sum each would willingly pay yearly for such Accommodation.

It is therefore requested, that such of the Inhabitants as this Proposal may be agreeable to, will give Information on those Heads to some Gentlemen, who will call at their House for it on Tuesday and Wednesday next. After this Information is obtained no Time will be lost, but every necessary step will be immediately taken, to enable all concerned to judge of the Propriety of the Plan; so that, if it should be found eligible, one Application to Parliament may answer several good Purposes together, and if not eligible, Lamps, Scavengers, &c. may be applied for without Delay.

The trade notices are very few; but it is clear from the following advertisement that our forefathers were especially sensitive to any undertaking which might injuriously affect their interests:—

November 30th, 1767.—Whereas the Warmley Copper and Brass Company are soliciting a Charter to incorporate themselves with a Capital of Four Hundred Thousand Pounds, and it is apprehended that so large a Sum would enable them to engross the Copper and Speltre Ores, and might thereby greatly prejudice the many different Trades dependent thereon in this Town and Neighbourhood, those who are much interested to preserve our Manufactures, are earnestly desired to meet at the Castle Inn, at 6 o'Clock This Evening, the 30th Inst.

We are glad to read the following sensible notice, and trust that it was vigorously carried out.

December 28th, 1767.—The Overseers of the Highways of this Town, give this public Notice, that they are determined to prosecute all Persons, that do not secure and cover their cellars, or openings to the Street, from the Danger of People falling into them in the Night; and also all Nuisances, and Obstructions in the Public Streets.

This is also a sensible request, but judging from the carelessness of people at the present time it is to be feared that the admonition was in vain :—

December 28th, 1767.—As this Town is built on a Declivity, and consequently people likely to fall in frosty Weather, if the Inhabitants would avoid throwing Water at their Doors, and, on the contrary, strew a few Ashes, it might prevent many Accidents, by falling.

On January 18, 1768, the Overseers made the following appeal :—

To the Inhabitants of Birmingham.—The Overseers of the Poor intreat the Favour of such Inhabitants who have the letting of Tenements to the yearly Value of Ten Pounds, to enquire into the Character and Ability of the Persons applying, as when in Possession of such a Tenement they are not removable : Through Neglect, or some other Circumstance, several Families have lately obtained Settlements, to the great Prejudice of the Inhabitants, who already feel the Weight of the Poor's Levies. The Consequence ensuing from such Neglect will be fatal to this Town, if not timely guarded against : an Appeal this last Sessions at Warwick points out the Utility of this kind Caution.

By Order,

WILLIAM MEERS, Assistant.

Again we have a winter of great distress, and again the sympathy of the benevolent was at work for its relief. On February 1, 1768, we read,—

The Distresses of the Poor of this Town being taken into Consideration, a Collection was made for them Yesterday in the Churches, to the Amount of £26 and upwards.

Our next extract is a trade notice.

February 22nd, 1768.—The Plating Business, which has been a flourishing Trade for many Years in this Town, we are informed is at this Time much injured, through the propagation of an evil Report, that an Act of Parliament is in being, and would be put in Force, against the Venders, and Wearers of Plated Goods ; but we can assure those that may be misled by such Reports, that they are entirely false and groundless, no such Law was ever enacted.

An increase in the number of letter deliveries is a sign of progress and of growth. The merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen in 1768 doubtless read the following notice with pleasure :—

July 4th, 1768.—His Majesty's Postmaster General, for the farther Improvement of Correspondence, intending to establish a Post six Times a Week, instead of three, as at present, between England and Ireland, both by the way of Holyhead and Port-Patrick, has given Notice that the several Regulations for that Purpose will commence on Wednesday the sixth Inst., from which Time the Letters between several Parts of England and Ireland, which have hitherto been sent through London, will be circulated directly thro' the Bye and Cross Roads ; by which Means the Correspondence between this Town and many other Commercial Parts in both Kingdoms will be greatly accelerated.

Here is the beginning of keeping the Cheese Market at the Welsh Cross, and the reason for holding it at that place.

August 8th, 1768.—Birmingham Cheese Market.—The exorbitant Price of weighing and putting up of Cheese at the present Market being very hurtful to the Public, by advancing the Price considerably, the Cheese Market will be kept at the Welsh Cross on Thursdays, where it is hoped Farmers and Factors, &c., will bring their Cheese for Sale, it being a more convenient Place for a Market, and it is hoped all Housekeepers, Huxters and others, will encourage this Undertaking, as it will be of publick Utility.

N.B.—Large Warehouses are provided for the Reception of Cheese. Scales and Weights for weighing, at One Penny per Hundred.

Here is something about the bells of St. Martin :—

September 12th, 1768.—The Seven Tons, Seven Hundred and Eight Pounds, mentioned in our last to be the Weight of that grand Peel of Ten Bells, at St. Martin's Church in this Town, was a Mistake. We, therefore, inform the Publick, that the true Weight of the said Peel of Bells, upon which that musical, new, complete, and well performed Peel of Six Thousand, Two Hundred and Ten Grandsire Cators (composed by John Archer, Bob-caller,) was rang, amounts to Seven Tons, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Two Pounds.

A great flood visited us in November, which is thus recorded :—

November 14, 1768.—On Friday Morning about Four o'Clock it began to rain here, and continued Thirty Six successive Hours, which caused the greatest flood that has been remembered for Forty Years. The Damage done by the sudden Swell of Deritend Brook is considerable, the great Pool Dam at Hockley burst in three different Places, and that belonging to John Taylor, Esq., of Bordesley, rose over the top of the Dam, and broke down 12 Yards of the Wall, which encompasses the Estate. The loss of Fish from both of these Pools is very considerable.

We have in the next extracts the announcement of a meeting and what came of it, which is not frequently the case in these early records.

December 19, 1768.—The Manufacturers and Dealers in the Leather Trade, are desired to meet at Mr. Jordan's, at the Dolphin, Wednesday next, at Six o'clock in the Evening, to consider of an Application to Parliament, relating to the present high price of all sorts of Leather.

Birmingham, January 23rd, 1769.—At a numerous Meeting (last week) of the Manufacturers of Leather in this Town, a Subscription was entered into, and it was resolved to join the Cordwainer's Company in London, in order to petition Parliament relative to the present high Price of Leather.

A bit of Birmingham election news will not be unacceptable :—

March 20, 1769.—It is very much to the Honour of this Town, and to Mr. Skipwith in particular, that ever since the Advertisement of the said Gentleman appeared (offering his services to represent the County in Parliament, in the room of our late worthy Representative, William Bromley, Esq.) such an unanimous Zeal has been shown in his Behalf, by the Freeholders, its Inhabitants, of every Sect or Denomination, as is not to be paralleled with any former similar Occasion, either in this or any other County; and what renders it still more remarkable is, that so general a Disposition, in favour of this deserving Gentleman, and staunch Friend to the Liberty of his Country, should occur at a

Juncture when the Town is so unhappily divided in their opinions about other Matters. It admits, however, of some Hope, that the good Sense which they have manifested in the above Instance, *without the least Persuasion whatever*, will soon operate in no less uniting us for the Town's particular Accommodation.

We select one more notice of the Bean Club which will be interesting to the present members of that ancient society ;—

August 14, 1769.—At the Anniversary of the Bean Club, held at the Swan in this Town, on Friday last, the Right Hon. Lord Craven, and Thomas Skipwith, Esq. one of our worthy Representatives for the County, attended and were elected two of the Stewards for the Year ensuing. The Day was spent with uncommon Festivity, many Constitutional Toasts went round ; and under the Auspices of the present Stewards, we hope to see this Society, ever devoted to the Support of Liberty and Independence, flourish with as great Splendour as at any former Period.

This was the period of the triumph of the redoubtable Wilkes. The famous agitator had evidently many friends in this town. He was released from prison on April 17, 1770. On April 16, the following Advertisement was published :—

Birmingham, April 14, 1770.—Several Gentlemen having expressed a Desire of celebrating, in a decent Manner, The Day of Mr. Wilkes's Enlargement,—The friends of that Gentleman and of his Cause are invited to Dine at the Castle Inn, on Wednesday next the 18th Inst.—N.B. Those Gentlemen who intend the Favour of their Company on this Occasion are requested to send for Tickets before Tuesday Evening, a Provision will be made in Proportion to the Number then disposed of. Dinner Tickets at 2s. 6d. will be delivered at the Bar of the Castle.—Dinner at Two o'Clock.

On the same day an advertisement appeared which is remarkable for containing the first mention we find of the name of the poet Freeth.

At Twelve o'Clock To-morrow will be published,

(Price Sixpence)

Wilkes's Enlargement,

An Ode,

By J. Freeth,

With an occasional Song, in Lieu of the old K.'s Ghost, which is deemed unsafe. An Entertainment will be provided by the Author on Wednesday the 18th, who is fitting up a commodious Room for the Reception of those Friends to the Cause that think proper to attend.—Dinner to be ready at One o'Clock.

In the next week's paper we read the following news paragraph, by which it would appear that the *Gazette* was favourable to Wilkes and his cause :—

April 23, 1770.—The London Papers Abound in Accounts of the Manner in which the Day of Mr. Wilkes's Enlargement has been celebrated all over this Kingdom ; but we

have not Room to Copy them. In this Town the Day was spent *by many Friends to that celebrated Patriot in a social decent Manner, expressive of their Regards for him in Consequence of his Sufferings for the noble Stand he made in Defence of the Liberties of the Subjects of this Empire, and the Evening concluded with Fireworks, Illuminations, &c.*

This year witnessed further changes in the Post Office for the purpose of "accelerating the correspondence" between this and other towns. The notice appeared on June 25, 1770.

Post Office, Birmingham, June 25, 1770.—His Majesty's Post Master General has been pleased to order that, for accelerating the Correspondence between the several Towns in the Chester and North great Roads, and their Branches, a Post shall be dispatched from Birmingham to Derby, and from Derby to Birmingham, thro' Lichfield and Burton-upon-Trent, every Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, so soon as the Mails from London arrive, and on Tuesday early in the morning. These are thereunto to give Notice, That from the 6th of July next, The Letters from Lichfield, Burton-upon-Trent, Derby, Ashbourne, Matlock, Wirksworth, Winster, Alfreton, Crick, Chesterfield, Nottinghamshire, Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster, Rawcliff, Howden, Hull, Ferrybridge, Selby, Pontefract, Gainsborough, Brigg, Barton, Kirton-in-Lindsey, and the adjacent Places, will be forwarded from Birmingham by this new Branch, on the days before mentioned. The Letters for the Parts of Yorkshire not mentioned above, Durham, Northumberland, and Scotland, will be forwarded from Birmingham by this Branch, or by way of Manchester, &c. on the same Days; and by Coleshill on Wednesday night as usual. The Letters for all parts of Leicestershire will be forwarded by this Branch on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday Morning; and as usual on Sunday and Thursday nights. The Letters for Stockport, Buxton, Tidewell, Bakewell, Chapel-in-Frith, and the adjacent Places, will be forwarded by this Branch on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday Mornings; and as usual on Wednesday nights. Letters from all the Parts and Places before mentioned, from the North in general, and from Ireland, will likewise be received at Birmingham more frequently and expeditiously than at present. The Letters to and from all other Parts will be sent and received by the same Conveyance as at present. And whereas great Numbers of Letters are still conveyed by Carriers, Stage Coachmen, Waggoners, Boatmen, Dispensers of Country Newspapers, &c., contrary to Law: These are also to give Notice, that all Persons so offending will be prosecuted with the utmost Severity.

N.B. The Penalty by Act of Parliament is Five Pounds for every Letter illegally carried, and One Hundred Pounds for every Week such Practice is continued; half whereof is to the King, and half to the Informer.

By Command of his Majesty's Post Master General.

GEORGE HODGSON, Surveyor.

For Birmingham people to be looking after their rights of Common has a strange sound to our ears, yet in 1770 a meeting of the freeholders was called for this object. On July 2, this advertisement was published:—

Birmingham, June 30, 1770.—The Freeholders in the Parish of Birmingham in the County of Warwick having a Right of Common upon Birmingham Heath, are desired to meet at the Swan Inn at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon on Tuesday the 10th of July, to consult upon a proper method of applying to Parliament for a Power to enclose, and other Matters relative to their Rights.

The following advertisement affords an additional illustration of the public spirit of this period:—

Birmingham, July 7, 1770.—At a Meeting held at the Cross Chamber pursuant to public Notice on Tuesday last, it was agreed, in order to the better Accommodation of the Town in general, and the Poor in Particular, with the Article of Coals, that a sum not exceeding £300 be immediately raised by way of Levy for repairing the Road from the present and intended Wharfs; and we are informed, that the Proprietors of the Canal will further contribute to the Execution hereof, by lending their Boats for Conveyance of the Materials necessary for the above Purpose.

The words of the Duke of York as to the meanness of the Assembly Room in the Square, and the still greater meanness of its entrance, produced an impression on the minds of those who heard them. It was soon afterwards determined to build a hotel on the Tontine principle, and on August the 27th, 1770, the following advertisement appeared:—

All and every the Subscribers to the Tontine for erecting a Tavern. Hotel, &c. are required to pay into the Hands of Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co. at the Bank, in Birmingham, aforesaid, the Sum of Ten Pounds of their respective Subscriptions, on or before the 17th Day of September next, pursuant to an Order made the 24th Day of August Instant.

THOMAS STEWARD, Secretary.

The chief Market was held in High Street, and was called St. George's Market. In 1770 the following notice of shop accommodation having been made for those who attended the market, was published:—

Birmingham, September 24, 1770.—St. George's Market.—Notice is hereby given to the Butchers, both in Town and Country, Fish and Cheese-Mongers, Poulterers, Gardeners, Fruiterers, &c. &c. That there is neatly fitted-up, in the above mentioned Market Place, a large Number of Shops (many of which are not yet taken) with a Fire Place in each, and a chamber over, which will be let at the easy Rent of Three Pounds per Year.

Enquire at No. 27, Colmore Row.

N.B.—Any Person for whose Business one Shop may be too small, may have two laid together, or any other Alteration made that may be thought necessary.

The next notice alludes to the curious practice of calling a meeting by “the tolling of a bell.”

Birmingham, June 14, 1771.—The Overseers of the Poor desire the Inhabitants of the Town to give them the Meeting at the Chamber over the Old Cross on Wednesday next, at Nine o'Clock at the Tolling of the Bell, to pass one Bye Bill, and to grant them a Levy.—Likewise to take into Consideration by what Method the Militia is to be raised for the present Year, and to know the Sense of the Town in Respect to assessing the Canal.

On July 22, we find this reference to a trick in trade which shows how old is the practice of giving short weight and measure :—

It having been the Practice for many Years past, when Bushels have been tried by the Town Standard, to lift it up on one side, and let it fall down for 3 Times, in order to make it hold just Measure ; and this Method being thought to be very wrong and imperfect : This is to give Notice, That the Town Brass Standard Bushel and other Measures, have lately been regulated by the Winchester Standard, and Bakers and Maltsters, are hereby desired to bring their Measures, to the Chamber over the Old Cross, on Tuesday next by Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, there to be examined and adjusted : Whoever shall neglect or refuse to do so, if upon Examination afterwards their Measures should be found Deficient, will be prosecuted as the Law directs.

By Order of the Officers.

The next announcement relates to a very different subject.

Birmingham, October 14, 1771.—The Inhabitants of the Town, are desired to meet at the Chamber over the Old Cross, To-morrow, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, at the Tolling of the Bell, to consider of an Application to Parliament for Building a Church.

The 5th of November, gunpowder treason and plot, brought the old constable trouble, even as they bring it to the modern policeman. In October the authorities issued the following notice :—

Birmingham, October 31, 1771.—Whereas great Complaint hath been made of Persons throwing Serpents, Squibs, and Rockets in the Streets whereby the Town is often in Danger of being set on Fire, in order that no Person may plead Ignorance the Constables of Birmingham have caused an Abstract to be made of the Act of Parliament of the 9th and 10th of William.

Here follows the abstract.

The last day of this decade contains the record of an act, which very worthily closes an account of the public life of a period marked by extraordinary activity, and an exceptional number of good works.

Birmingham, December 30th, 1771.—A Subscription is opened at the House of Samuel Aris, Printer, for the Relief of the poor industrious House keepers of this Town, upon the following conditions.—1st. That a Committee of twelve Subscribers of not less than One Guinea, be chosen by Ballot for the Distribution of the Charity.—2nd. That each Subscriber of One Guinea have the Recommendation (in Writing to the Committee) of Four objects, and so in proportion to their Subscription, more or less.—3rd. That the Committee have the Distribution of the Charity, to the several Objects at their own Habitation, at Five Shillings and Three-pence per Head.—4th. That no Object shall receive more than once.

The Subscribers are desired to pay their Subscriptions, and send their Recommendations in Writing to the Committee, or to S. Aris, on or before the 30th of January next.

And in such Christian efforts ended the year 1771.

§ 3. EDUCATION AND LITERATURE.

The progress made in education and literature during this period was not commensurate with the general growth of wealth. The cultivation of the mind, and the love of literary pursuits are the last to develop themselves anywhere, and the people of this town seem to have been too much absorbed in business, and with the desire to get on, to pay much attention to anything which did not immediately assist this all-engrossing purpose. There were, however, some slight advances made in this direction. The Free Grammar School was doing something, although not much, in imparting education to the young. We had also teachers of French and of dancing, and lectures were occasionally given. A book or two and a few pamphlets were published by Birmingham men. But taken altogether the literary labours of the decade were of a very trifling and unimportant kind. John Freeth, whose works we shall have to notice at a later date, wrote some of his songs prior to 1771. The literary notices, however, are few and far between. On April 26, 1762, this advertisement appeared :—

This is to acquaint Gentlemen and Ladies,—That the French Tongue is taught with the greatest Fidelity and Expedition, at Mr. Atwell's, in Colemore Row, Birmingham, by their most obedient servant,

JEAN GUIEN, late of the University of Lausanne.

N.B.—Mr. Hughes, late Teacher of French, declines returning to Birmingham.

Here is an announcement respecting an art which some people still think forms no part of education—but happily they are gradually becoming a smaller minority.

Birmingham, June 21, 1762.—Signor Giorgi takes the Opportunity of informing young Gentlemen and Ladies, that if they choose to have his Instructions in the Art of Dancing, he shall be willing to attend them, at his leisure Hours, during his Stay in this Town.

In 1763 died one who, although not a Birmingham man, was so intimately connected with the locality that we may fairly introduce

his name here. William Shenstone and the Leasowes form a part of our local history : the fulness with which his death is recorded in the *Gazette* shows the interest which Birmingham felt in this good man, if not brilliant poet. On February 21, 1763, many persons doubtless read the following announcement with sorrow :—

On Friday the 11th of February, 1763,
 After a short, but violent Fever,
 Which he bore with a philosophic Fortitude,
 And with a Christian Resignation, dy'd,
 Aged 48,
 William Shenstone, Esqr., of the Leasowes,
 The Pride of his Country,
 The Favourite of the Muses !
 And, what still more redounds to his Praise,
 The Enemy of Vice, and the Friend of Virtue.
 But to delineate the utmost of his inestimable Worth
 Would swell a Folio ;
 And no surviving Genius is equal to the Task.
 Ask his foes his Character ;
 But where shall they be found ?
 Ask his Acquaintances ;
 They would talk down the sun in his Praise !
 Ask his Friends ;
 Sorrow will choke their Utterance !
 And the Poor will reply—alas !—but with Tears !
 But the Voice of the World will thus pronounce ;
 He lived—universally belov'd—and dy'd—universally lamented.

Next week this tribute to his memory appeared :—

To the Printers of the Birmingham Gazette.

February 28, 1763.—An individual (who, from an enviable Acquaintance with the late Mr. Shenstone's Virtues and Accomplishments, most sensibly laments that Loss, which every ingenious and good Man must feel) desires your Insertion of the following. The Thought was suggested (as may be plainly perceived by the last Passage) from the Recollection of an Inscription which that Social Being placed in his own Walks, to the Memory of a valued Friend.

M. S. Gulielmé Shenstone !
 Ah ! Gulielmé !
 Hominum dignissime,
 Amicorum intergerrime
 Indole optimâ,
 Eruditione præcipue diffusâ,
 Moribus gratissimis,
 Ac Corde quam maximé benigno,
 Prædite,

Morte eheu ! præmaturâ abrepte,
 Ah ! Gulielmé,
 Vale !

“ Quanto minus est,
 Cum aliis versari,
 Quam tui meminisse.”

Again on the 28th we have these lines :—

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. SHENSTONE.

By a Lady.

On the Left Side
 Of the sole Building I can call my own,
 Is consecrated
 A Monument
 To the Memory of
 The beloved and lamented
 William Shenstone :
 It is formed something like an Urn
 But of Substance so soft
 That all his Virtues
 Were, with Ease, engrav'd on it ;
 Yet so tenacious
 They never can be erased.—
 It is inscribed with Affection and Respect
 For the gentle and elegant Qualities
 Of which He was
 The happy Possessor,
 And stamp'd with the deepest Gratitude
 For the Honour he had conferr'd
 By his kind and condescending Notice
 Of the
 Thereby dignified Owner.

To William Hutton belongs the honour of opening the first Circulating Library in the town. In 1751 he “hired out books” from his little shop in Bull Street. He did not, however, continue in the business long ; but it set an example which was sure to be followed. The most important literary event of this decade was the opening of a much larger library than that of the historian's. This was done by Joseph Crompton, in Colmore Row. It was, we believe, the predecessor of the late Evans's Library. The following is the announcement of Crompton's intention.

April 4, 1763.—To the Inhabitants of Birmingham, and the Country adjacent : particularly all Lovers of Literature, and mental entertainment.

CIRCULATING LIBRARIES being established and encouraged in most of the principal Cities and Towns throughout the Kingdom, JOSEPH CROMPTON, Stationer, in

Colmore-Row, near the New Church, Birmingham, desires by this means to acquaint you, that he has been at considerable Pains and Expence in collecting a small Library, consisting of about Eight Hundred Volumes, of the most esteemed modern Publications, and intends to purchase for the future all the new Books and Pamphlets, suitable for that purpose, as they are published.—Catalogues of the Library, with Conditions, may be had at his shop gratis.

N.B. He sells Books in all Languages and Faculties (by Commission) at the lowest Prices, and takes Subscriptions for the Magazines, Reviews, and all other periodical Publications.

Several subsequent advertisements prove that this library was successful. In March, 1767, a new catalogue was published, and the library contained nearly three thousand volumes.

In July was tried at the Guildhall, London, the action brought by the printers of the North Briton against the King's Messenger, when they obtained a verdict for £2,000 damages for false imprisonment. On the 18th the following poem, signed J. F. (John Freeth), appeared in the *Gazette*.

ON A LATE VERDICT.

Tune—"The Lilies of France."

Since Freedom each powerful Opponent repels.
What Friend to his Country his Gladness conceals?
As Liberty's Sons in exerting their right,
I have cudgel'd the State and triumph o'er might.

CHORUS.

From Thame to the Tweed loud Huzzas we will send,
For Liberty's Cause, and for Liberty's Friend.
What Pages in Hist'ry, if backward we trace,
Can point out a hint of so noble a Case?
What Records can any such Instances call,
Than what has been lately obtained at Guildhall?
May Suff'rance more great fall on those who contend
With Liberty's Cause, against Liberty's Friend.
How bless'd, and how joy'd, are the lads of the Press,
How fondly their Patron and Patriot caress?
Then strike up the Song, let the Tabor be mute,
Assist the glad Chorus with Hautboy and Flute.
To Wilkes, and to Liberty, joyfully sing,
Whilst Shouts from the West make the vaulted Sky ring.

In September of this year the following school advertisement appeared. It may be mentioned that the descendant of this Swinbourne is the present master of Hall Green School: and that the Editor of these memorials was taught the "three R's" by the son of Mr. John Reynolds, in his school "near the Chapel in Deritend."

September 12, 1763.—John Reynolds, late Assistant to Mr. Swinbourne, at Hall-Green, begs leave to inform the Publick that he purposes to open a School near the Chapel in Deritend, on Monday the 3rd of October, for the Instruction of Youth of both Sexes, where he intends to teach the following Branches of Learning, viz. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, both Vulgar and Decimal; also Merchants' Accounts. Those who please to favour him with the Education of their Children, may depend on the utmost Care being taken of them, and their Favours will be gratefully acknowledged by their most obedient Servant,

JOHN REYNOLDS.

N.B. Those who please to see his Performance, may see a Specimen of his Writing at the said School.

On October 31, 1763, was printed John Freeth's song on that ever popular subject,—

BIRMINGHAM BEER, A NEW SONG.

To the Tune of "Ye Prigs who are troubled with Conscience's Qualms."

Ye Mortals who never in all your wild Trips
 With good humming Liquor saluted your Lips,
 Give Ear to my Story, ye Strangers to cheer,
 The Pleasure I sing of is Birmingham Beer;
 'Tis here the Salutis of Life's to be found;
 For Merchants who circuit the Kingdom around
 Declare, on their Travels from Thames to the Tweed,
 That Birmingham Stingo all others exceed.

I grant that fair Nottingham once bore the Bell,
 That our Grandsires ne'er tasted the Sweets of good Ale;
 But our Fathers unravelled the Myst'ry, and we
 Enjoy the blest Comfort in jocular Glee;
 It banishes Care, and removes all our ills,
 When we sip at the Fountain, or tipple at Gill's:
 Then here, ye Salopians, I beg you'd Repair,
 If wonted to taste of the choicest of Beer.

Our true Othodox, from the Barrel fresh come,
 Throws the Tankard lid up by the Strength of the Foam;
 This Strike-fire of Nature, prepared right the Dose,
 Either 'livens or lulls us to gentle Repose;
 'Tis the Spring of Invention, a Balm that imparts
 The Cause that promotes and inspires us to Arts;
 Then who would not wish to partake of the Juice,
 When knowing the feats it is wont to produce?


Let others in vain boast of different places;
 But say, can they turn out such plump ruddy faces?
 Such free jovial Fellows, with Cheeks red as Roses,
 Who swim in October to rattle their Noses?
 Ye Beer-drinking Souls, to Good-fellowship prone,
 That dwell Miles a hundred or more from our Town,
 'Tis well worth your Notice amongst us to steer,
 If only to taste of fam'd Birmingham Beer.

J. F.

The year 1764 was ushered in with a literary proposal which promised much, but realised little. The magazine was published, and reached twenty-five numbers. Mr. Samuel Timmins possesses a complete copy, but it contains nothing about Birmingham except an occasional marriage or death, and some small paragraph of news in nearly all cases copied from the *Gazette*.

January 2nd, 1764.—This day is published, Proposals for Printing on the First and Fifteenth of every Month, Price only 3d., a NEW WORK, entitled, The Coventry, Warwick, and Birmingham MAGAZINE ; or the Gentleman and Lady's Polite Amusement. Which will contain useful and entertaining Pieces of Prose and Verse ; with every Thing else worthy of Notice, that shall from Time to Time appear in the other Magazines, periodical Papers, and new Publications. To which will be added, a well digested Account of all the Public Transactions and Occurrences of the preceding Fortnight, under the Title of the History of Europe. In the Course of this Work, the Substance of Books on almost every Subject, will be introduced ; which will render it, as it were, a Library of itself ; and as the Intent of this publication, is only to afford an agreeable Amusement to the Reader, which may at all Times be referred to with Pleasure and Benefit, it is to be hoped, every one disposed to such a rational and agreeable Entertainment, will be inclined to encourage it. It need therefore only be observed, that the Purchaser will, at the End of the Year, upon the most reasonable Terms, find himself possest of several Hundred Pages of the most useful and entertaining Matter.—Notwithstanding this Magazine will be published at the price of only Threepence, it will always contain near as much as those published in London at the Price of Sixpence.

N.B. The first Number is intended to be published on the 15th of January Instant. Anyone who purchases the first Number, and does not think it worth his Money, may have it returned.

 Those Gentlemen, Ladies, &c., who choose to be supplied with this Magazine, are humbly requested to signify their Intentions immediately to J. Jones, in Coventry, the Printer and Publisher ; Mr. Keating and Mr. Sharp, in Warwick ; Mr. Warren, jun., and Mr. Sketchley, in Birmingham ; Mr. Lingard, in Atherstone ; T. Luckmand, in Coventry ; and the Printers of this Paper.

Our next extract is worth quoting :—

April 16th, 1764.—Wednesday Evening last the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c., adjudged the first Premium of fifty Guineas, for the best Landscape, to Mr. Barratt, a celebrated painter from Dublin ; *the second of twenty-five, to Mr. Bond of Birmingham ;* and the third of fifteen to Mr. Stewart, of London.

The next advertisement affords us the first example of an uneducated local poet. Besides announcing the work, it gives a short biography of the author. It is especially interesting, for in those days uneducated rhymers were a rarity which this age of popular education has rendered somewhat common. There were preliminary advertisements, but the announcement of the publication of the book appeared on May 14, 1764.

This Day is published, Price 3s., Elegantly Printed in Quarto, Poems on Sundry Occasions, By James Woodhouse, a Journeyman Shoemaker.

The Author of the above is now a Journeyman Shoemaker, at the Village of Rowley, near Hales Owen, about seven Miles from Birmingham, and two Miles from the late Mr. Shenstone's of the Leasowes. He had no other Learning than what was sufficient to enable him to read and write, being taken from School at seven years old; but to use his own Words, finding, when he was about eighteen, such an invincible Inclination to Reading, and an insatiable Thirst after Knowledge, he expended all his little Perquisites in the Purchase of Magazines, till he became acquainted with Mr. Shenstone, who never refused to lend him any Book his elegant Library could furnish him with; but the Death of his generous Patron has again circumscribed his Improvement chiefly to the monthly productions.

He is about twenty-eight years of Age; has a Wife and two or three small Children, whom he endeavours to maintain by great Application to his business, and the teaching Children to read and write; both of which Occupations bring him in not more than eight Shillings a Week. He generally sits at his Work with his Pen and Ink by him, and when he has made a Couplet he writes them down on his Knee; so that he may not thereby neglect the Duties of a good Husband and kind Father; for the same reason his Hours for Reading are often borrowed from those usually devoted to sleep.

Southey in his interesting volume on Uneducated Poets gives us a few items of information about James Woodhouse. Shenstone had been compelled to close the Leasowes to the public on account of the shameful injury which the visitors committed. "Woodhouse," writes Southey, "upon this occasion addressed some verses to him, entreating that he might be exempted from this prohibition, and permitted still to recreate himself and indulge his imagination in that sweet scenery; and Shenstone, who was always benevolent and generous, when he inquired into the character of the petitioner, admitted him not only to his grounds, but to the use of his library also."*

Some idea of Woodhouse's poems may be formed by the following stanzas from that entitled Spring,

But now domestic cares employ,
And busy every sense;
Nor leave one hour of grief or joy,
But's furnish'd out from thence.
Save what my little babes afford,
Whom I behold with glee;
When smiling at my humble board,
Or prattling at my knee.

* Lives and Works of our Uneducated Poets, p. 114-115.

Not that my Daphne's charms are flown.
 These still new pleasures bring ;
 'Tis these inspire content alone ;
 'Tis all I've left of Spring.

* * * * * * *

I wish not, dear connubial state,
 To break thy silken bounds ;
 I only blame relentless fate,
 That every hour demands.

Nor mourn I much my task austere,
 Which endless wants impose ;
 But oh ! it wounds my soul to hear
 My Daphne's melting woes !

For oft she sighs, and oft she weeps,
 And hangs her pensive head,
 While blood her furrowed fingers steeps,
 And stains the passing thread.

When orient hills the sun behold,
 Our labours are begun :
 And when he streaks the west with gold,
 The task is still undone.

"These verses," says Southey, "were pointed out to me, for their feeling and their truth, by the greatest poet of the age;" who doubtless was Wordsworth. A second edition of these poems was published in 1766, and Woodhouse issued a second volume in 1803, and was then living near Norbury Park, "where he seems to have found a generous friend in Mr. Locke. He was then above sixty-eight years of age; I do not know when he died." And thus unknown and unhonoured passed away one of the first of our uneducated poets.*

The following advertisement will give us a good idea of lectures occasionally delivered in Birmingham a century back. It appeared on April 29, 1765.

Mr. Arden begs Leave to acquaint the Gentlemen and Ladies in this Town and neighbourhood that as soon as Thirty or more have Subscribed, he will begin a Course of Lectures upon Experimental Philosophy, at Mrs. Sawyer's Room in the Square, consisting of twenty Lectures, at which will be exhibited all the Experiments necessary for the Explanation of Natural Philosophy in general, or the Properties of Matter, and the Laws by which it acts. Astronomy, or the Phenomena arising from the Motion of the heavenly Bodies. Geography and the use of the Globes &c. Hydrostatics, or the Nature and Laws of Fluids explain'd. Pneumatics, explaining the surprising Properties of the Air,

* Mr. John Woodhouse, of West Bromwich, very kindly lent me a MS. volume, copied by himself, of his relative's poems. Mr. S. Timmins has a Portrait of "James Woodhouse, Ætat 81," which is said to be that of the shoemaker poet.

which depends upon its Pressure and Elasticity, its Rarefaction, Condensation, &c. Optics or the Science of Vision explained.

N.B. The greatest Care will be taken (through this Course) to render the Experiments as plain and intelligible as possible, even to those who have not applied any Time or Study this Way. The Apparatus with which the Experimental Parts of these Lectures will be conducted is extensive and elegantly finished with the latest Improvements.—The Charge of going through this Course is One Guinea, to be paid at the First Lecture. Subscriptions are taken in by Mr. Wyatt in Bell Street, and by R. Pearson and S. Aris, Printers, where Syllabuses of the Lectures may be had gratis.

On December 23, 1765, was advertised proposals for printing by subscription, in quarto, with a frontispiece, from a new drawing, “Edge Hill, or the Rural Prospect delineated; a Poem in Four Books.”—Containing whatever is most remarkable in that Scene, with Episodes, and Reflections adapted to the subject,

By RICHARD JAGO, A.M.

Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus.

Magna virum : tibi res antiquæ laudis, et artis.

Ingredior, sanctos, ausus recludere fontes.

It is difficult to say whether the next advertisement should be classed as educational, or placed among the amusements. However, as it relates to a lecture, we quote it here :—

May 25th, 1767.—In the large Room, at the Red Lion, in Digbeth, Birmingham, this present Evening the 26th Instant May, and on Wednesday and Friday, if due Encouragement is given, will be delivered by R. Whitworth, a New Satirical Lecture upon Hearts, which was delivered in London 48 Nights, and in several other places, with universal Approbation, with Additions and Improvements, wherein will be exhibited Drawings, representing the Characters of thirty-three Hearts belonging to Persons of different Sexes, Tempers, and Professions, whether odd, ridiculous, vicious or virtuous, proving that a Lecture on Hearts is more instructive than one on Heads; The whole being designed to form an instructive Picture of Human Life, to enforce a Propriety of Conduct, and to expose Vice and Folly.

“If wrong our Hearts, our Heads are right in vain.”

The Doors to be opened at Seven, and to begin precisely at Eight o'clock.—Tickets, at 1s. each, may be had of the Printers of this Paper, the Castle, and at the Red-Lion.—N.B. Books of the Lecture may be had at the Door, after the Lecture is over, at 6d. each.

In 1769, Miss Poynton, the blind poetess of Lichfield, announced the publication of a volume of poems, and probably to propitiate the people of this town, and to give them a specimen of her abilities, she sent the following lines to the *Gazette*, which were duly published :—

September 4, 1769.

EXTEMPORE ODE.

Addressed to the Inhabitants of this Town, by Miss Poynton.

Ye graceful Nine, oh, now assist my Lays ;
 And teach me how I Birmingham may praise !
 Such Excellence, when I attempt to paint,
 My feeble Muse I find, alas ! too faint.
 Who of thy Arts can adequately sing ;
 Arts that have made each distant Climate ring !
 Thy Equal, yet, no Nation ever knew ;
 Then to thy Genius all Respect is due.
 But stronger Claims from you, demand my Lays ;
 In you I find all—all that merits Praise.
 Friend to the Poor, benevolent, sincere !
 Fair Truth and Pity all thy Actions steer.
 Thy generous Bosom with Compassion glows,
 Thou kindly sooth'st the Widow's, Orphan's Woes !
 To humble Merit ever known a Friend ;
 Their Aid to raise it, all thy People lend.
 As God-like MILTON's could my Numbers flow
 In polish'd Verse, I'd then thy Merits shew ;
 Could I with Pow'rs like matchless Blacklock sing,
 With Birmingham I'd make each Nation ring !
 My Virgin Muse, untutored, Critics spare !
 Nor Homer's, Blacklock's, Milton's more sincere.

Another "effusion" by this lady, which appeared in the *Gazette* on September 25, is so curious that we quote it. It is addressed to the Queen, and we wonder what that "sprightliest lass," "my Charlotte," thought of the verses when she read them.

A SONG ADDRESSED TO THE QUEEN,

By Miss Poynton, of the City of Lichfield, who is soliciting a Subscription for the Publication of her Works.

My Charlotte is the sprightliest Lass,
 That ever tripp'd the verdant grass,
 Or trod the flow'ry Vale ;
 Let others sing, that Celia's fair,
 And write on Chloe's charming Air,
 I sing of Charlotte's Fame.
 Whilst Nature does on some bestow,
 Bright sparkling Eyes, and Cheeks that glow,
 With each attracting grace ;
 Her Purity of Mind and Heart,
 Devoid of ev'ry Female Art,
 Gives Lustre to her Face.

Ye Bards awake my Charlotte's Praise,
 Esteem this Fair-one worth your Lays,
 Who does her Sex excel ;
 Virtue and Sense bedecks my Fair,
 Assist me then, she's worth your Care,
 Whilst I her Merit tell.
 Her Breast with noblest Friendship glows,
 No Pride or Affectation knows ;
 Open's my Charlotte's Mien :
 For her with joy I'd tune my Lyre,
 Her Virtues can my Muse inspire
 Beyond the Cyprian Queen.

Birmingham is still famous for its Medallists, a fame which has descended to it from a long line of Artists in this beautiful work. Here is an advertisement of one who was famous in his day. It is remarkable that the second notice to be found of Mr. Westwood should be in connection with the celebrated Shakspeare Jubilee.

Birmingham, August 30, 1769.—On Monday next will be published,—A Medal of the inimitable Shakespeare, struck either in Silver or Copper, done from that intended to be worn by Mr. Garrick, at the approaching Jubilee, which is an improved Likeness of that Great Man. Ladies and Gentlemen may have them either in Cases for the Pocket, or with Pendants for the Bosom, at Mr. Westwood's, Engraver, in Newhall-Walk ; or at the Toy-Shops, in Birmingham ; they may likewise be had at Mr. Payton's, at the White-Lion, in Stratford, and the Toy-Shops there.

* * Ladies and Gentlemen may have them struck in Gold, on the shortest Notice.

In March, 1770, Mr. Edward Nicklin, of this town, published "Pride and Ignorance, a Poem." In September appeared the following lines in Memory of the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson, at one time head Master of the Free Grammar School. The lines record one of those strange mutations of fortune which unfortunately are only too common.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE REV. MR. WILKINSON.

Oh ! Wilkinson, how fresh thy Mem'ry flows
 Through fading Time, and like a Lily grows :
 Still ripening more as rolling Years run on,
 While Merit owns thee for her darling Son.
 Arise great Shade, and view the annual Feast
 Where Bumpers rouse thee from thy peaceful Rest.
 But oh ! avert thine Eyes, no farther trace
 The Breath of Fame along thy blighted Race.
 Alas ! thy Son, so cherish'd, and belov'd,
 Has, since thy Death, a wretched Orphan rov'd ;

Now stands a Beggar at the Rich Man's Door,
And craves the blessing of the hungry Poor ;
While Governors, and Scholars, all thy own,
Remember thee, but quite forget thy Son.

In 1771, Mr. Joseph Giles, late of Birmingham, published a volume of Miscellaneous Poems, "revised and corrected by the late Mr. William Shenstone." In June, Mr. Ferguson began a second course of Lectures on Experimental Philosophy, which concludes all the educational and literary items of this decade. The harvest is small, but then the labourers were few.

§ 4. AMUSEMENTS.

There is little to record of the amusements of this period : they were numerous, but not novel. Concerts, the theatre, the circus, balls, exhibitions of curiosities, conjuring, and the ever-obtruded cock-fighting, attracted their votaries and afforded relaxation and recreation to our over-worked forefathers. A few extracts selected from an enormous number will suffice for this section. The first announces a performance on the Musical Glasses :—

January 18, 1762.—Mr. Lambourne returns his most grateful Thanks to those who have already honoured his Performances on the GLASSES, with their Company and Approbation ; and as he has given general Satisfaction, he intends staying some Time longer.

N.B. He gives Notice, that he shall perform at Mr. EVERSMAN'S in Colmore Row, from Ten to One, and from Three to Seven in the Evening, this Day, and all the Week, and no longer. Admittance One Shilling. *A Constant Fire in the Room.*

The next informs us of the feats of horsemanship exhibited here a century since. The advertisement is worth extracting for other reasons.

February 8, 1762.—Mr. Johnson will perform the first five Days in this Week, being the very last he shall exhibit in this Town, in a Piece of Ground *adjoining to the further End of the Gardens, near the New-Chapel, towards Vauxhall.* His Performances are as follow :

- 1, He rides upon the Back of one Horse, standing upon one Leg, and in that Position he gallops three Times round the Place.
- 2, He rides two Horses with his Foot in each inside Stirrup, and when the Horses are in full Speed, leaps from the Stirrups with a Foot upon each Saddle, and in that Posture continues tossing up his Cap, and Cracking his Whip.
- 3, He rides Three Horses with a Foot upon each outside Horse, and when they are in full speed, lets two of them go, and leaps on the Third, without checking them.
- 4, He rides a single Horse, and while in full speed mounts and dismounts instantaneously, and to the great Surprize of the Spectators, flies over the Horse when at his greatest

Rates.—Tho' what is here mentioned may seem incredible to those who have not seen Mr. Johnson, yet it is undoubtedly True, that his Performances exceed all he did Two Years ago. The Doors to be open'd at Three in the Afternoon, and mount exactly at Four.

Admittance One Shilling.

*** Mr. Johnson will take care to make the Road good from the Chapel to the Piece of Ground.*

Here is a curious case of repentance and confession :—

April 29, 1762.—As nothing so plainly distinguishes Gratitude in any Man as to acknowledge his faults committed to his Friends, I, John Redell, am determined from the Date hereof, never to attempt to fight a MAIN of COCKS again, as witness my Hand,

J. REDELL.

P.S. As to my Old Dons and Little Davids, they are no more.

Of the exhibitions provided at this time few could have been more curious or interesting than the two following :—

April 19th, 1762.—To be seen from Ten o'Clock in the Morning till Nine at Night, at the Black Lion, in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, a Surprising Piece of Clock Work, consisting of three Statues: The first represents a Shopkeeper in a Toy Shop, who opens and shuts his Doors, and is ready to serve them with Gold Rings, Watches, Silver Spoons, &c. The second represents a Vintner with a Cask under his Arm, who, at Command, draws Red, White, or mix'd Wine. The third represents Merlin, with a Wand in his hand and a Bell before him; who tells the Day of the Week, the Hour of the Day and Quarters; Persons drawing a Card may be informed how many Spots and the Colour; Any Spectator may think of a number under Twelve, and he will tell what the Number is; how many Gentlemen and Ladies are in the Room, &c.

Admittance is left to the Generosity of Gentlemen and Ladies; but for Servants and Children, Six-pence each.

The Proprietor intends staying in Town only this Week, and returns his Thanks to the Gentlemen and Ladies for their Favours.

Birmingham, July 3rd, 1762.—At Richard Hawkin's in Edmund-Street, on Thursday next, will be exhibited four curious Pieces of Mathematical and Mechanical Machinery: The 1st is the Representation of a Toy shop, with the Toyman behind his Counter, that at the Word of Command opens and shuts a Pair of folding Doors, and serves his Customers with the following Toys, in any manner they please to call for them.—1. Watches; 2. Watch Springs; 3. Watch Glasses; 4. Watch Keys; 5. Gold Rings; 6. Silver Spoons: he also makes his Obedience to the Company, and, if required, tells you the value of his Toys.—2nd is a Vintner placed on a Pedestal, with four small Casks filled with Wine and Spiritous Liquors, with a Cock in each Cask, and serves the Company at the Word of Command with the following Sorts: 1st Red Wine; 2nd White Wine; 3rd Brandy; 4th Rum; each Cock turning and stopping very visible, as natural as human hand can turn it. 3rd is an Hermit in his Cave, with a Rock or Cascade on each side of him; he, at the Word of Command, turns his head towards the Company, and by striking with his Staff, causes the Water to run down which Rock the Company please to mention. 4th is the Figure of Merlin placed upon a Pedestal, with a small Wand in his Hand, and a Book before him; and the first Question that is asked him, turns his Head

towards the Company, and by striking his Bell with his Magic Wand, causes the Book to open, keeping it open all the while of his Performance ; several surprising Questions are asked him, all of which he answers by turning his Head and striking on his Bell, and when done, shuts his Book again.

To be seen from Five o'clock in the Evening till Nine. Admittance is left to the Generosity of Gentlemen and Ladies, but for Working People and Servants Six-pence each time.

In August, 1762, this notification was made :—

There will be an Exhibition of some Oratorios here about the End of October, if the Town is not averse to the Patronizing of them.

This is followed by an advertisement in September, giving these particulars :—

September 20th, 1762.—Mr. Bond takes this public Opportunity of acquainting the Nobility and Gentry, who have honoured him for three Years past with their Subscription and Encouragement in the Prosecution of his Oratorios, that they would have taken Place at the usual Time this Year, but a very severe Fit of Illness in the Beginning of Summer, and an almost continued ill state of Health in Consequence of it, has prevented him from paying that early and close attention he has always found it necessary to do on former Occasions. As this is the true and sole Reason of the present Suspension of the Oratorios, Mr. Bond hopes his Friends will not consider it as a total Discontinuance, it being his full Design to go on with them the ensuing Year ; but not to disappoint them entirely of a Musical Entertainment this Year, he proposes to have a Concert on Tuesday the 5th of October next. The Vocal Parts by Messrs. Price, Mence, and Saville.

Tickets at 2s. 6d. each, to be had of Mrs. Jobson, Printer, Mr. Parker, Bookseller, in Coventry, and of Mr. Bond. There will be a ball as usual.

But what shall we say of the immortal Bridges, the parallel of Archimedes ?

January 17th, 1763.—If Sicily can boast of her Archimedes, England may equally glory in her Bridges. He has not only constructed a Piece of Art which exhibits the various Revolutions of the Planets, &c., but displays likewise several of the Arts and Sciences. He has embellished this inimitable Performance with a wonderful Variety of Moving Figures, Landscapes, &c., &c., and when compleated, with great Propriety call'd it the Microcosm.—It is to be seen any Time of the day by four or more at one Shilling Each, At Seven o'Clock it will be shewn to more or less, three Doors above the Red Lion in Digbeth all this and next Week.

We rejoice to read anything which indicates the presence of a feeling repugnant to the cruel sports which then prevailed. However slight it may be, it is the dawn of a spirit which is certain to increase and gain in strength until it is powerful enough entirely to put a stop to the practice, or to banish it to the secret haunts of the vicious, to be dealt with by the law. It is a long work, but in the end the better cause prevails. There is much yet to be done before men can be brought

Never to blend their pleasure or their pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that breathes.

In our own day the brutes of Croydon are the lineal descendants of the cock-fighters of old. The public display of this shameful sport was however doomed when such paragraphs as the following began to be written and read. It appeared March 5, 1764 :—

As the barbarous Custom of Throwing at Cocks too much prevails yet upon Shrove-Tuesday, to the Disgrace of real Christianity, true Humanity, and a good Police, in a civilized country ; all the Magistrates in the Kingdom should Prohibit it, and punish all Offenders, for their own and the national Credit, being a cruel Diversion to kill innocent Animals in that wanton Manner.

The next extract is a theatrical announcement :—

June 25, 1764.—We hear that the English Opera of LOVE IN A VILLAGE will certainly be perform'd at the Theatre in King-Street on Friday next : And that the Masque of COMUS, written by Milton, is now in Rehearsal, and will be speedily perform'd at the same Theatre, with new Dresses and Decorations. Madame Capdeville, the celebrated Dancer, is expected here sometime this week, and is engaged by Mr. Younger to dance at the above Theatre with Signior Lanchery and Miss Tetley.

Theatrical advertisements sometimes ventured upon criticism ; and when they did they afford us some fine examples of the *curiosa infelicitas*. Here is one on “As You Like It” :—

August 20, 1764.

(By particular Desire)

For the Benefit of Miss Ward,

At the New Theatre in King Street, Birmingham, on Friday Evening, the 24th August, will be presented a Comedy call'd

As You Like It.

(Written by Shakespear.)

This Comedy, tho' one of the first Productions of that immortal Genius, has been allowed by all the Dramatic Writers to be at least equal, if not excel, any other of his Performances. The established Reputation it ever has and still continues to hold, with all Judges of Literature, and Frequenters of the Theatre, both for Variety of Character and Incident, True Humour, and Usefulness of Morals, speaks louder in its Favour than all that can be said in Praise of its Merit.

The letter of a correspondent published on September 2, 1765, tells us something about the Theatre. It reads dreadfully like a puff.

To the Printers of the Birmingham Gazette.

I have in the course of this Summer when the Weather would permit attended the Play-House in this Town, and have been sometimes pleased with the Performance ; particularly with the Maid of the Mill, King John, &c. ; and now I mention King John, I must take notice of the very excellent Performance of two characters played by Mrs. Ward and Master Kennedy ; there was not a dry eye in the House ; Mrs.

Ward's great Feeling and masterly manner of conveying her Grief, made each Person present feel as much as if they were in the Circumstances : and the Pleadings by Master Kennedy to Hubert, where he is about to lose his eyes, astonished the Audience, that a Boy so young could be so Natural, and yet so forcible as to omit nothing that the oldest Actor on the Stage would have made Use of to gain the Applause of the Audience. I think 'tis Pity that Merit is not more encouraged here. Master Kennedy, I am told, played the character of Prince Arthur twice before his Majesty, and that the Duke of York, and the present Princess of Brunswick, took great Notice of him, and paid him many Compliments when the Play was over.—I hope he will meet with Encouragement, as I hear he is to have Part of a Benefit ; and as he cannot be supposed to have Acquaintance, being too young to Keep Company, 'tis hoped the Encouragers of Merit, particularly the Ladies, will make a Point of sending for his Tickets, and let the Town see it is not always owing to keeping a great deal of Company, or an overgrown Interest that always makes a great Benefit.

I am your Constant Reader,

BENEVOLUS.

The year 1766 opened with an exhibition of a more serious character ; and proves that then, as now, all tastes were catered for :—

January 6th, 1766.—To be seen, from Eight in the Morning till Eight at Night, at the Seven Stars, in the High-Street, Birmingham, Mr. Motett's Six Curious Pieces of Marble Sculptures, representing the Sufferings of our Saviour, from his last Supper to his Crucifixion ; also his Appearance to the Holy Women in Galilee, after his Resurrection, in upwards of 400 Fine Figures in Relievo ; they were designed as a present to the French King, but taken in the War 1745. To which are now added four Fine Paintings, on the same Subject, by the most eminent Masters, finished in the year 1577, taken at Vigo in 1702. Books, giving a curious and just Description of these excellent Pieces, to be had of the Man who delivers the Bills, and at the place above mentioned. Gentlemen and Ladies, One Shilling each ; Servants Six Pence. From hence they will be removed to Sutton-Coldfield, but for a short time, in the Way to Lichfield, Burton, and Derby.

A sober, honest Man, that can blow a French Horn or Trumpet well, may hear of Encouragement.

* * Pray observe our Stay is but a few Days.

The transition from the grave to the gay is in these matters rather sudden. From Scriptural sculpture to a pantomime is a wide leap, but it has to be taken ; for life is made up of a succession of such transformation scenes.

July 7th, 1766.—The Pantomime Entertainment of Harlequin Sorcerer on Friday last was received with universal Applause and Approbation, and is generally allowed greatly to exceed any Thing of that Kind ever performed here, both for variety of Incident and Machinery, as it contains not only all the capital Tricks used in London in the Pantomime of that Name, but also the celebrated Dog Scene from Perseus and Andromeda. It can only be performed this week, as the Benefits begin the following one, for which Reason it will be done this Night, To-Morrow, Wednesday, and Friday. The Machinery is entirely made, and the Entertainment planned by Mr. Weller, who belongs to Covent Garden Theatre.

We gather from the advertisements that there was not a little difficulty in keeping up the periodical performance of Oratorios at this time. In October, 1767, this advertisement appeared :—

October 5th, 1767.—The Oratorios of the Messiah, Sampson, and the Mask of Acis and Galatea, will be performed here on Wednesday the 21st; Thursday the 22nd, and Friday the 23rd Days of this Month. The Music will be conducted by Mr. Capell Bond, Organist, of Coventry. The principal Vocal Parts by Miss Thomas, Messrs. Norris, Mathews, Price, Saville, &c., &c. The principal Instrumentals Messrs. Adcock, Miller, Lates, and Others.

It was followed by a decade of verses celebrating their revival.

October 19, 1767.

ON THE REVIVAL OF THE ORATORIOS, IN BIRMINGHAM.

In other Towns whilst Oratorios please,
Shall we in gloomy Silence spend our Days?
Nor taste of those Enjoyments that impart
Melodious Sounds to captivate the Heart?
Sons of Apollo, who the Name revere
Of Handel, and his Memory hold dear,
Let not the circling Seasons pass unsung;
And whilst you've power to charm the list'ning Throng,
Bid dulness fly, nor let it e'er be said,
Where Arts are cherish'd, Music droops its Head.

On October 26th we have the gratifying intelligence that,

The Oratorios performed here last Week gave the greatest Satisfaction to a very numerous audience each Day; about Eight Hundred Persons were at the New Church on Friday to hear the Sacred Oratorio, amongst whom were many of the neighbouring Nobility and Gentry, and it is intended to have these Performances continued annually for the Benefit of a Public Charity.

The celebrated Shakspeare Jubilee, designed and carried out by Garrick, was held at Stratford-on-Avon, on September 6, 7, and 8, 1769, and Birmingham caught a little of its reflected light. On September 25 this announcement was published :—

SHAKESPEARE.

For One Night Only.

At the Theatre in King Street, Birmingham, on Thursday, October 5, will be performed a Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music, in Three Acts. To consist of all the Songs, Glees, Catches, and Roundelays lately performed at Stratford Jubilee; with the Ode written by David Garrick, Esq., in Honour of Shakespeare.—The Vocal Parts by Mr. Parsons and Others, the Instrumental by the best Performers of this Town, and from Gloucester, Worcester, and Lichfield, &c.—The speaking of the Recitative Parts of the Ode will be humbly attempted by a Gentleman of this Town.—Also a New Occasional Prologue, and other Particulars, which will be expressed in a future Advertisement, and in the Bills of the Day.

Tickets will be ready to be delivered out on Wednesday, by Mr. Parsons, at Mr. Hodges in Peck Lane ; at the Swan in the High Street ; the Box-Iron in Dudley Street ; of Mr. Moore in Edgbaston Street ; at Mr. Gill's, in Worcester Street ; and of Pearson and Aris, Printers.

Here is the picture of a Corsican Fairy !—

June 11, 1770.—Birmingham.—Novelty has sometimes Charms sufficient to engage the Attention of the Public ; but if the Curiosity exhibited has no real Merit, that Attention will be found but of very short Duration. It is quite the Reverse with Maria Teresa, the Corsican Fairy. Her astonishing Littleness, admirable Symmetry, and pleasing Vivacity, daily attract great Numbers of the Curious to see her. Struck with an agreeable Surprize at her amazing Form, they bestow the highest Encomiums on her ; and confirm the Opinion of the Judicious in all Countries where she has been shewn, that she is the finest display of human Nature, in Miniature, they ever saw. She is still to be seen in commodious Apartments, No. 87, in the High Street, where she will continue till Wednesday Night next, and no longer, on Account of Coventry Fair.

The next advertisement gives us the record of a little theatrical quarrel.

September 5, 1770.—Whereas a Report having been industriously propagated with a Design to prejudice the Ladies and Gentlemen of Birmingham against the present Manager of the Theatre and the whole Company, in Relation to Mr. and Mrs. Jackson's not being allowed to Play so often as they otherwise would have done. This is to assure the Public in general, that such Report is without Foundation, as both Mr. and Mrs. Jackson have been frequently solicited to Play, when both of them have as frequently refused to comply with such request. The Company would likewise recommend it to them to behave themselves with less Pride and Arrogance, and more Justice to the next Community they may chance to be engaged in ; lest their bad Conduct should exclude them from every Theatre.

William Brereton	M. Wrighton	Robert Summers
John Sherriffe	Hannah Palmer	Francis Langlois
William Cooke	Mary Capon	S. Sherriffe
J. Edwin	William Gloucester	Ann Gloucester
James Wright	R. Wemstyer	Susannah Kirby
W. Palmer	Charles Moor	

We close the record of the amusements of this period with a description of the conjuring, or, as it is called, "dexterity of hand," which delighted our forefathers :—

March 25, 1771.—Dexterity of Hand.—This present Evening, at the Little No-Theatre, at the top of Needleless-Alley, in Birmingham, are to be seen the noted Mr. Tayler's Grand Medley of Performances, being the most extraordinary ever exhibited in England. He had the Honour to perform before his present Majesty in the Years 1770 and 1771.—1st. He does most surprising Tricks blind-fold, which was never seen before.—2nd. He takes a Glass and drinks thereout, and after breaking it in Pieces, commands the same whole again before all the Company.—3rd. He desires any Lady to pull off a Ring and throw it among the Company, and at the same Time he commands the

Ring back again into a Box, inclosed in six Boxes and the last Box secured with a Lock and Key.—4th. He puts several Pieces of Money into any Gentleman's Hand, which he either increaseth or diminisheth, the Gentleman having them in his Hand at the same Time.—5th. He permits any Gentleman to take a Piece of Thread, and measure it to any Length, he burns it, and spins it to the same Length again.—6th. He takes a Piece of Money of a Gentleman and puts it into a Plate, standing five Feet distant, and conveys the Piece from the said Plate unto a Plate held in his Hand.—7th. Any Lady or Gentleman may cut a Piece out of a Lady's Apron, Handkerchief, or Ruffle, and the said Artist will join it without Needle or Thread.—8th. He likewise permits any Lady to draw one Card out of a Pack, holding an Egg in her Hand; he causes her to put the Card into the Pack shuffling the Cards, and at his Word the Card flies into the Egg which the Lady had in her Hand; another Lady takes an Egg, out of which, at his Word, he causes a whole complete Female Array to proceed.—9th. He performs with live Birds and Perukes, multiplying one to one Dozen, without stirring a Hand from the Table.—To conclude with Mr. Punch and his virtuous Lady, with their whole Family of Soft Heads and Woodenskull Gentry. The Doors to be opened at Six, and begin exactly at Seven o'Clock.—Boxes, 2s. Pit, 1s. Gal. 6d.

§ 5. MANNERS, CUSTOMS, ETC.

Manners and Customs change more slowly than aught besides. Individually and collectively we are the slaves of habit; and for most men each day is but a repetition of the one preceding, and to-morrow will find them treading in the old paths, performing the old acts, and sharing the old amusements. Still, customs and manners *do* change, and although in so many things we are but repeating under other forms the doings of our forefathers, we shall find that only a century since—and a century in the history of a town is little more than a day in the history of a man—things were done which seem curious to us. A few extracts will enable us to catch the manners as they fly. We should read with astonishment now a paragraph like this, which appeared on August 16, 1762:—"An Advertisement having been printed off in the first Page of this Paper, which we since find will give offence, we have thought most proper to cut it out." And accordingly the papers were published with the objectionable Advertisement literally cut out. This announcement was so thoroughly carried out that even the file copy has suffered excision, and no one now can know what it was which gave offence.

But what will be said of John Foxhall, who thus advertises his domestic troubles ?

August 23, 1762.—Whereas Elizabeth the Wife of John Foxhall, of Wightwick, in the Parish of Tettenhall, and County of Stafford, Yeoman, hath lately left her said husband and his Family, and taken with her divers Things, Household Goods, and other Things of Value ; this is therefore to require her to return to her said Husband, and to bring back with her all such Household Goods and other Things so taken away, on which Terms she will be kindly received by her said Husband, *and on a proper Behaviour in future, all past faults forgiven* ; but if she refuses so to do, her said Husband hereby gives Notice, that he will not pay any Debt or Debts she shall henceafter contract, and that all and every Person or Persons that do or shall henceafter harbour, entertain, or conceal the said Elizabeth, his said Wife, or from her or under her directions, take, receive, or dispose of, any of the Household Goods, or other Goods or Chattels of the said John Foxhall, will by him be prosecuted, without further Notice, for the same.

JOHN FOXHALL.

Dated the 19th day of August, 1762.

The next tells us of a practice which perhaps might have been retained with advantage to science :—

October 23rd, 1762.—The Body of the Malefactor, who is order'd to be executed at Lichfield on Monday the 25th instant, will be afterwards conveyed to the House of Dr. Darwin, who will begin a Course of Anatomical Lectures, at Four o'Clock on Tuesday Evening, and continue them every Day as long as the Body can be preserved, and shall be glad to be favoured with the Company of any who profess Medicine or Surgery, or whom the Love of Science may induce.

The method of announcing marriages at this time differs somewhat from our own. If the statements made about the young ladies were literally true our Ancestral Benedicts ought to have been happy fellows. Take two as specimens of ordinary notices :—

July 25, 1763.—On Thursday last was married at St. Martin's Church, Mr. Joseph Oughton, jun., an eminent Gun Barrel Maker of this Town, to Miss Dolly Whately, an agreeable young Lady, with a handsome Fortune.

July 2nd, 1764.—Sunday se'nnight was married at St. Chad's in Salop, by the Rev. Mr. Wingfield, Mr. William Heath, an eminent Merchant of this Town, to Miss Sally Foulter, *a young Lady endowed with every Qualification that can render the Marriage State happy.*

The next is perhaps the earliest notice of the abolition of a custom which ought never to have existed.

King-Street Theatre, July 16, 1764.—The Performers at this Theatre | take the Liberty of requesting such of their Friends, as propose favouring them with their Company at their Benefits to come early, as the Plays will begin exactly at Seven o'Clock ; *and should the Front of the House be ever so full, there can be no admittance behind the Scenes.*

A Green Goose Feast! Some of our readers will doubtless wonder what sort of a feast this could have been.* Such a one was held yearly at many of the public houses at this time.

July 16, 1764.—Thomas Moore, at the Cock in Dale End, begs leave to acquaint his Friends that his Annual Green Goose FEAST will be held at his house on Friday next, the 20th of July, and that the Favours of their Company will be gratefully acknowledged, by their most humble Servant,—THOMAS MOORE.

Here is a specimen of threatening letters a hundred years ago :—

January 21, 1765.—Last Monday night some Villians broke into the House of Mr. Brittain, Apothecary, in the High Street, and stole from thence a Gold Watch, which they took out of a Cupboard in the Parlour, wherein where several Pieces of Plate, which they did not meddle with ; they attempted to break open a Bureau in the same Room, but without success ; they also open'd a Drawer in the Shop, and took some Money from thence, but left 19d. in Half-pence behind.

Between Seven and Eight o'clock the next night the following letter was sent :—

“To Mr. Britton in ye high Street Birmingham.

I ham a Neighbour and ham Near Destres for want of about ten or fifteen Pounds if you will help me out you shall have your Watch again safe or els not as you can aford it for you have had ten times that of me and shall have that again as soon as I can spare it if you dont I must fli my Country and then my life will be very Troublesome and I must Loose my Life or Being if you Ofer to blo Or Refuse me ye mony I will blo your Brains Out the first time I meet you if I dont my Co pr. will for me for we dont Vaulle our Lives Sr if you will save me from a shamfull end for it is the first time I ever wanted money and shall be the Last I need not wante ite now if I could get my own in Pray excuse me Sr as I ham Realy in distres if you will I never will trouble you any more you shall have ye watch ye night after I have ye money if dont fail Letting me have ye money if you do my Life for yours if you will you may Lap it up in a peis of Paper and put it in abit of hay and about ten of ye Clock On Wensday Night next being the 16th Open your Entry door and lay it on ye Step and I will come for it myself if you Ofer to Get any asistance I will Loose my Life and then avat yours for I will be well harm'd for if I ham taken your Life wont be Long if you do This time I never will trouble you any more I do ashure you neaither shall you be that Out of Pocket do Good Sr Consider a person in destris I would have ask'd you but if I had and my affairs had comm to be none I should have been ruind, as I ham in Trad if you wont Lap up a letter in Sted Sr I hope we shall be better accountd from your Servant Mr 1 2 3 4”

Accordingly on Wednesday Night something was laid wrapp'd up in Hay, but no one came.

The naïveté of the proceeding given in the last paragraph is quite refreshing. We select two more examples of this style of ancient literature :—

March 13, 1769.—The following threatening letter was found at the Back-Door of Mr. Brueton's House in the High Street, in this Town, on Thursday Night last :—

* Geese before they are turned on to the stubble.

"Mr. Brueton if you Pleaseen to Lay Ten Pounds in Money at a Certin Place at the Back Door up in the Entry on Thursday Night Next Without fail If You Do not your house on ye following night shall be all in flames. If it tis not I will be Dam'd. So take it as You Please for if You Do not You will find your house ye Next Morning in ases.

Witness our hands E. S. D. E.

and 13 moor of the Gang for we are Stout hartted fellows and feir nothing."

Birmingham, January 21, 1768—Whereas the following threatening Letter was found under the Door of Mrs. Walker, in Moor-Street, on Tuesday Night last, directed thus :—

"For Mrs. Walker Moor-Street."

"Madam.—your a good woman Ime a poor man you Can aford itt I Wantt itt Lay Ten Guineas in a Old Shoe upon your Stepp to morrow night Eleven O'Clock Or your house Shall Blase Before Sunday and then Beware of money and goods

"3 Sworn to do hitt

"tuesday night,

"Wele non be putt off."

Raising money by state lotteries was then a common practice ; but it was not often that such a lucky hit occurred as this :—"We are assured that the Gentlemen belonging to the Society at the Phoenix in Park-Street, purchased five Tickets in the Present Lottery, and they are all come up Prizes."

Here is something about a fashion which has long since gone out :—

November 28, 1768—William Jones, in Birmingham, takes this Method to acquaint the Public in general, that he makes Cork Wigs both Bags and Bobs, in all their various Fashions, in the highest Perfection possible, so as not to be distinguished from the common Hair Wigs, but by their Superior Elegance. A farther excellence of them is, that the Wearers may dress them in a Minute's Time, though ever so much disordered, and make them appear more neat than the other Wigs, which would take an Hour in dressing them as they ought to be, and for Service they are greatly beyond any yet constructed, as many Gentlemen, whom he has had the Honour to serve, can witness. All Commands shall be expeditiously and faithfully executed.

One example of an old Birmingham sharper :—

December 19, 1768.—Thursday last a Farmer was met in this Town by a Sharper who asked him if he could take a Letter to a Place he named, the Farmer replying he could, was prevailed on to go with him to a Publick House, where, in a Back Parlour, sat two or three of the Sharper's Companions, who pretended a Dispute about which had the most Money ; this brought on Cards, and the Farmer was induced to play ; but, to his great Mortification soon found himself fleeced of Twenty Pounds, which the Sharpers carried clear off.

Bad habits are even more durable than good. At the present time the newspapers are justly complaining of the foolish and dangerous practice of throwing orange-peel on the foot-path ; and serious accidents are the consequence of this thoughtless and culpable act. On June 19, 1769, the public monitor had to give the following caution :—

We think it a Duty incumbent on our particular Part, at this Time to caution very seriously all Persons who regard the safety of Mankind, against throwing Pease or Bean Shells upon the Foot Pavements, by which many Persons walking the Streets, especially those who carry Loads and Burthens, are exposed to imminent Danger : And it is earnestly recommended to all the Shop-keepers to sweep them into the Streets when they see any lie before their Doors.

It may not be uninteresting to the ladies to know the price of drapery at this period. From a tradesman's advertisement of 1769 we quote the following. The goods are said to be offered much below the ordinary selling prices on account of the great advantages of the seller ; but this must be taken for what it is worth.

Great Choice of printed Linens and Cottons 18d. to 5s. a Yard.

Great Choice of Muslins, all Sorts, 3s. to 16s.

Flower'd Muslins, at 7s. 8s. 9s. and 10s. per Yard.

Ell-wides Striped ditto, 3s. 6d.

Very fine Book ditto.

Flower'd Striped and plain Lawns, 16d. to 10s.

Long and Silesia Lawn, 2s. to 10s.

Hollands and Irish Linens, 10d to 10s..

Needle-work achieved wonders in the careful and industrious hands of the ladies of the olden time. The specimens which remain of their handiwork are marvels of patience, perseverance, and frequently of great skill. In 1771 we read :—

There is lately finished, by a Lady of this Town, a Portrait of his Majesty, in Needle Work, allowed by the Connoisseurs to be the greatest Curiosity ever seen of the kind, being the closest Likeness to his Majesty, and so highly finished, that it has all the Softness and Effect of Painting.

“Slaves cannot breathe in England,” says Cowper. But this was not always the case. The following advertisement refers to Lichfield ; but it recalls so vividly before us the great change wrought by Sharp and his fellow labourers, and is in itself so curious that it deserves a place here :—

November 11, 1771.—To be Sold by Auction, on Saturday the 30th Day of Nov. Inst., at the House of Mrs. Webb, in the City of Lichfield, and known by the Sign of the Baker's Arms, between the Hours of Three and Five in the Evening of the said Day, and subject to Articles, that will be then and there produced, (except sold by private Contract before the Time) of which Notice will be given to the Public by John Heeley, of Walsall, Auctioneer and Salesman. *A Negro Boy from Africa, supposed to be about Ten or Eleven Years of Age. He is remarkably straight, well-proportioned, speaks tolerably good English. of a mild Disposition, friendly, officious, sound, healthy, fond of Labour, and for Colour, an excellent fine Black.*—For Particulars enquire of the said John Heeley.

Could a Southern slave auctioneer dwell more lovingly on the qualities of this specimen of a human chattel ?

Here was a piece of good news to the youthful lovers of glory and haters of hard work. Sergeant Galbet knew his trade.

July 22, 1771.—He That Works Hard Is Sure to be Poor.

After six Day's hard Labour
Comes Sunday—you rest ;
And no sooner peeps Monday
But you are quite shy of Cash.

Therefore to make Life easy, and fill your Pockets with Money, Sergeant Galbet, will learn any young Man a Profession (without Fee or Reward) by which the Learner will be sure to earn a Guinea and a Crown the very first Hour. He will also introduce you to His Majesty's First Division of Marines, which is always quartered at Chatham, only thirty miles from London to which Place Pleasure-Boats carry Passengers for Six-pence each. When you arrive at Chatham, you are immediately provided with Cloaths, free Quarters in a Public-House, where you will be sure to meet with merry Fellows, a kind Landlady, and a rousing Fire ; do nothing, but on a fine day dance to the softest Music, feed on Dainties, drink the best Liquors, and Play at "Why won't you" with the prettiest Girls, saying "Chatham for ever," and

"God save the King."

N.B. He teaches no Militia Men or Apprentice.

A Birmingham traveller gives us an account of a curious sight which he witnessed. This might be called a trade demonstration of the eighteenth century.

June 17, 1771.—A Gentleman of this Town travelling between Nottingham and Sawley on Monday the 10th Instant, and meeting with a Train of Frame-work Knitters, (to the Number of 300 at least, with their Press Irons in their hands) was tempted to ask one of them the Reason of such an extraordinary Appearance, and received the following Answer :—"We are going, Sir, from all the neighbouring Parishes, upon an Invitation from our Brethren in Nottingham, and the Country round, to meet in the Market-Place in Nottingham To-day at Eleven o'Clock, to raise the Price of Stockings Two-pence a Pair, for Provisions are so dear, we can't maintain our Families. And if the Masters won't agree to raise the Prices, we are determined to throw down our Press-Irons and return home." What Numbers were assembled, and what success they met with, we are not yet informed, but we are inclined to hope their reasonable demands were complied with, and that they returned peaceably to their Habitations and Employments.

The following "Card" is a strange illustration of the manners of that day. Mr. T——r referred to was the Rev. James Turner who was Minister at the Baptist Chapel, Cannon Street, from 1753 to 1780.

July 8, 1771.—To the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette.

A CARD.

In Justice to the Rev. Mr. T——r, who is reported to have been the principal Propagator of the Disturbance that arose near the Banks of the River Jordan in Cannon

Street, on Sunday Fortnight, I think it incumbent upon me (as an Observer) to give the public a true Narrative of the affair. A Person in the Table Pew, not satisfied with hearing, seemed very anxious of bringing away the Contents of the Sermon; but as the Preacher did not choose to have his performance copied down, in a few Minutes after naming the Text, broke off from his Discourse, and in strong Emphasis cried out "I don't allow any one to write after me." The Writer regardless of what was said, still ventured to proceed, when behold the Minister again called out "Take the Pen out of that Man's hand." The Parson's Mandate was obeyed, two Persons arose, and after some Struggling the Pencil was wrested from his Hand by J——s a Copper-smith, and H——d a Cabinet-maker.—Query.—Whether Mr. T——r has acted any otherwise than what is consistent with his dignity.—OBSERVATOR.

Neither Observator nor any other correspondent deigned to give a reply to this courteous query, and it remains unanswered to this day. The reader will not be long in answering it for himself.

THE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

The foundation of such a noble charity as the General Hospital is an event of memorable importance in our local history. The men who originated it, and whose contributions made it possible to carry it out, are deserving of the eternal gratitude of the community. Of the many important works undertaken between 1761 and 1771 the establishment of this Hospital ranks as the most important. Hutton gives us no information as to its origin. He contents himself with a few vague reflections on charity, and then gives us this short paragraph on the beginning of this great institution. "The shell," he says, "of this plain but noble edifice was erected in 1766, upon a situation very unsuitable for its elegant front, in a narrow dirty lane, with an aspect directing up the hill, which should ever be avoided." He is right as to the unsuitableness of the site selected, but it is a pity that one who lived so near the time, who personally knew Dr. Ash, the founder, who once saved his life, and many of the earliest friends of the Hospital, has not left us a fuller record of the beginning, the progress, the difficulties, and the success of this noble undertaking. The file of the *Gazette* enables us to some extent to supply the desiderated information. It will be noticed that nearly all the extracts which we quote are advertisements. The news columns of the paper giving us the rarest scraps on the subject.

The first notice is a modest one in which it "is presumed" that such a charity would be "greatly beneficial," and calls a meeting to consider how to render the suggestion effectual. We quote the advertisement :—

Birmingham Nov. 4, 1765.—A GENERAL HOSPITAL for the Relief of the Sick and Lane, situated near the Town of Birmingham, is presumed would be greatly beneficial to the populous Country about it, as well as that place. A Meeting therefore of the Nobility and Gentry of the Neighbouring Country, and of the Principal Inhabitants of this Town, is requested on Thursday the 21st Instant, at the Swan Inn, at Eleven in the Forenoon, to consider of proper Steps to render effectual so useful an undertaking.

All public undertakings, no matter how good, are sure to meet with opponents. So it was with the proposal to found a hospital. Some of the wisacres of the time considered it a work of supererogation, and urged objections. The only knowledge we have of these objectors, and of the reason they alleged, is found in a postscript added to the preceding advertisement on November 18, and which reads thus :—

P.S. It having been objected to the Usefulness of the above-mentioned Design, that the present Infirmary established will answer all the purposes of it. It may be necessary here to observe, that more than half the Manufacturers in the Town of Birmingham, are not Parishioners of it, and cannot be entitled to any Relief from the present Infirmary : Many of them are Foreigners, but the greatest Part belong to the Parishes of a Neighbouring Country.

The men who had the matter in hand, however, were too earnest, and the work itself too good and too much needed for these obstructive cavillers to retard its progress. The meeting was held on November 21, and "it was unanimously agreed by the Noblemen and Gentlemen then present that this Design should be immediately carried into Execution, and a Subscription was then opened for that Purpose." A paragraph in the *Gazette*, November 25, gives us a little fuller information on this meeting than the mere fact of passing the resolution to begin the work. From that we learn that Benefactions to the amount of upwards of £1,000, and Subscriptions from £200 to £300 were raised.

November 25, 1765.—Last Thursday, in consequence of an Advertisement for that purpose, a considerable Number of Gentlemen, both of the Country and Town, met at the Swan, to begin a Subscription for erecting a General Hospital near this Town : The evident Utility of this Undertaking, in a Situation so well calculated for the Benefit of a Populous Country, and the ready and cheerful Assistance given by all who wish well to Acts of Charity, have already had the most happy Effects, and afford the most pleasing

Prospects of future Success, as the Benefactions at present amount to upwards of One Thousand Pounds, and the Annual Subscriptions to between Two and Three Hundred Pounds.

The work went on well, and day by day the funds rapidly increased. On October 31 the Benefactions amounted to upwards of £1,400, and the Annual Subscriptions to £400; on December 7, the former to £1,900, and the latter to £600, which amounts in a few weeks increased respectively in round numbers to £2,550, and £725. Amongst the earliest friends of the Hospital we find many of the most noted Birmingham names, some of whose descendants are still honourably associated with the Charity—and chief among these is the honoured name of Lloyd.

At a meeting held on the 24th of December, 1765, the rules were confirmed, and the first Committee elected. The following are the names of those whose labours and contributions on behalf of so noble an object won for them the confidence of the subscribers, and entitle them to the perpetual remembrance and honour of Birmingham people.

The Earl of Dartmouth	John Taylor, Esq.
The Earl of Aylesford	Henry Carver, Esq.
Sir Charles Mordaunt, Bart.	Samuel Garbett, Esq.
Sir Lister Holt, Bart.	Dr. John Ash
Sir Roger Newdigate, Bart.	Dr. William Small
Sir Henry Bridgman, Bart.	Mr. John Kettle
Sir Henry Gough, Bart.	Mr. Matthew Boulton
William Bromley, Esq.	Mr. Sampson Lloyd
Simon Luttrell, Esq.	Mr. Joseph Smith
Charles Colmore, Esq.	Mr. Samuel Galton
Jervoise Clarke, Esq.	Mr. John Turner
Benjamin Palmer, Esq.	Mr. Thomas Abney
Richard Geast, Esq.	Mr. Joseph Carles
William Dilke, Esq.	Mr. Francis Parrott
David Lewis, Esq.	Mr. William John Banner
Abraham Spooner, Esq.	

We are enabled to trace the work step by step, and it will be seen that there was no delay in carrying out the resolution of the first meeting. The trustees evidently went to their work with a will. On January 27, 1766, the following advertisement was inserted:—

This is to give Notice That a Public Board of the Trustees for the General Hospital will be held on Tuesday the 4th of February, at the Swan Inn, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, at which time the Trustees for this Impartial Charity are earnestly requested to give their Attendance, to receive the Report from the Committee for the intended Building, and to despatch other Business relating to the Hospital. The Gentlemen of the Committee are desired to meet at Eleven o'Clock, at the Swan, on Friday the 31st Instant, to prepare their Report for the Public Board.

At this meeting "it was agreed to purchase Land for the Building on the terms offered to the Committee; and a special public Board was ordered to be held on Tuesday the 4th of March, for receiving Plans and Estimates of the intended Building, sealed up." It is intimated in the same advertisement that "Such Builders as are desirous to engage in this Undertaking may apply to any of the Committee for what farther Information they may want."

The land upon which it was proposed to erect the Hospital belonged to Mrs. Dolphin, and the Committee agreed to buy a little more than seven acres, at £120 per acre. One clause of the agreement gives a very good description of the land, and enables the reader to form a picture of the rural character of a place then said to be "near Birmingham," but which is now in the very midst of this rapidly-extending town. The Committee agreed to purchase:—

All those four closes, pieces, or parcels of Land, Meadow, or Pasture Ground, situate, lying, and being together near a place called the Salutation* in Birmingham aforesaid, containing, by estimation, eight Acres or thereabouts, be the same more or less, adjoining at the upper end or part thereof unto a Lane there called Summer Lane, and at the lower end or part thereof unto a Lane called Walmore Lane, with the Barn and other Buildings standing upon the uppermost of the said Closes towards the said Lane called Summer Lane, with all Ways, Liberties, Privileges, Hereditaments, and Appurtenances to the same belonging or therewith used and Enjoyed.

At the meeting on March 4 "it was agreed to purchase the Land offered to them, and different Plans of the intended Building were sent in, and referred to the Consideration of the Committee. As immediate Contracts must be entered into with the Proprietor of the Land, and Person who shall be fixed upon to execute the Building, it is desired that the Nobility and Gentry will be pleased to order their Benefactions to be paid before the First Day of May next, into the hands of Mess. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co., at the Bank in Birmingham; Robert Child, Esq., and Co., Temple Barr; Mess. Smith and Payne, Lombard Street,

* The Salutation Inn, in Snow Hill, often mentioned in preceding extracts.

London; or any of the Receivers appointed in this Neighbourhood; who are desired to transmit the same to Mess. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co., in Birmingham.—N.B. The Nobility and Gentry who are inclined to promote this Universal Charity, and have not yet signified their Intentions, are earnestly requested to send their Benefactions to any of the above-mentioned Gentlemen.”

The next public Board was held at the Swan Inn, on the 6th of May, and the Trustees were earnestly requested to give their attendance on special business. Its importance will be gathered from the following advertisement :—

At the last Public Board of Trustees of the General Hospital, it was unanimously agreed to Vest the Property of the Land in the following Gentlemen :—

John Taylor, Esq.	Dr. William Small.
Henry Carver, Esq.	Mr. John Kettle.
Samuel Garbett, Esq.	Mr. Matthew Boulton.
Dr. John Ash.	Mr. Sampson Lloyd.
Mr Samuel Galton.	Mr. Joseph Smith.
Mr. Thomas Abney.	Mr. John Turner, Barr.

Which Trust is constantly to be filled up as Vacancies shall happen by the next Public Board after such Vacancies.

JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

On July 21 it was announced that a Board would be held on every other Tuesday to receive and pass the accounts of the builders. A Public Board was held on November 3, at which the “Benefactors and Subscribers” were desired to attend. The next advertisement tells its own story; it appeared June 1, 1767 :—

General Hospital.—Birmingham, May 26th, 1767.—At a Publick Board held this Day at the Swan Inn, (pursuant to Notice given in this Paper,) it appearing to the Trustees that a farther Sum than what was already subscribed would be necessary to complete the Building; It was therefore unanimously determined, that a Second Subscription of Benefactions for that Purpose should be opened, the Gentlemen then present subscribed; and when the importance of this useful Undertaking, in so populous a Country, is duly considered, it is hoped that the Nobility and Gentry, as well as the Inhabitants of the Town, will not be wanting in their generous Contributions to render it effectual.

Some of the Contributors to this Charity, having sent in their Annual Subscriptions unsolicited, they were accepted by the Trustees, as an Addition to their former Benefactions.

The Books for Subscriptions are kept at Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co., at the Bank, in Birmingham, or they may be paid into the Hands of any of the Correspondents, a list of whom was before published.

N.B.—The former Benefactions which were contributed in this Town have been all received, within a Deficiency of Ten Guineas.

JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

On January 25, 1768, we read :—

The Committee beg Leave to inform the Public, that the Building is covered in, and Preparations are now making to fit up the Rooms for the Reception of Patients with all possible Expedition; the former Benefactions having been found insufficient for this Purpose, a Second Subscription of Benefactions was proposed to the Members of the Committee present at one of their Meetings, and the following Benefactions were then subscribed, and the further Assistance of the Public is earnestly requested for the immediate furnishing and completing this useful and extensive Charity.

	£	s.	d.
John Taylor, Esq.	21	0	0
Mr. Sampson Lloyd and Son	21	0	0
Henry Carver, Esq.	21	0	0
Mr. Joseph Smith	21	0	0
Samuel Garbett, Esq.... ..	10	10	0
Francis Garbett, Esq.... ..	10	10	0
John Ash, M.D.	10	10	0
William Small, M.D.... ..	10	10	0
Mr. John Turner, Jun.. ..	10	10	0
Richard Parrott, Esq.	10	10	0
Mr. William Bentley	10	10	0
Mr. John Banner	10	10	0
Mr. Francis Goodall	5	5	0
Mr. Edward Hector	5	5	0
Mr. Samuel Galton	10	10	0
Mr. James Farmer	5	5	0

It is with regret that we learn that such a building as this was not considered sacred and free from the violence of the thoughtless and wicked. On July 11, 1768, the Board had to issue a notice, "that great Damage having been done to the Building of the General Hospital from loose disorderly People breaking the Windows, &c., Any Persons who shall hereafter be detected in such Scandalous Proceedings, will be prosecuted with the utmost Severity."

The next advertisement is a very important one. Never was the remark that small beginnings often lead to great results more fully illustrated. It contains the announcement of the first Oratorio which was performed for the benefit of the General Hospital.—The beginning of those glorious Musical Festivals which are now the honour of Birmingham and the pride of the musical world. It is an advertisement which will be read with profound interest by all. It appeared on July 25, 1768, and is as follows :—

General Hospital,

This is to give Notice, that a Public Board of Trustees of the General Hospital, will be held by Adjournment at the Swan Inn, on Wednesday the 7th of September next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, when all Trustees are desired to attend on Special Business. And for the Benefit of this Public Charity, on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the 7th, 8th, and 9th of September, the Oratorios of *Il Penserosa*, &c. Alexander's Feast, and the Messiah will be performed here.

The Oratorios of *Il Penserosa*, &c. and Alexander's Feast, will be at the Theatre in King-street, on the Wednesday and Thursday Evenings. On the Thursday Morning, at Eleven o'Clock, will be performed in St. Philips's Church, Mr. Handel's *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, with the Coronation and other Anthems, and the Messiah on Friday Morning at the same Place.—The best Vocal and Instrumental Performers will be engaged on this Occasion, the further Particulars of which will be inserted in a future Advertisement.

On September 5 is added :—

The Principal Vocal Parts will be performed by Mrs. Pinto, Mr. Norris, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Price, &c., Instrumental by Messrs. Pinto, Miller, Adcock, Jenkins, Park, Lates, Hobbs, Clark, Chew, &c. &c.

The Oratorios will be conducted by Mr. Capell Bond of Coventry, and the Performers are desired to attend the Rehearsal on Tuesday the 6th Inst., at 9 o'Clock in the Morning.

Tickets at 5s. each to be had at the Swan, Castle, Hen and Chickens, Dolphin, and the Red Lion Inns, Cooke's Coffee-House, and Duddeston Hall; of Miss Jefferies's, Mrs. Tildesley's, Miss Matthews', Miss Mallett's, Mr. Chawner's, and of Pearson and Aris, Printers.

The Music at the Church on Thursday Morning is to be opened with a Trumpet Concerto by Mr. Bond.

N.B. Ladies and Gentlemen are desired to order their Servants to drive their Carriages down Peck-Lane and up King-Street, as they go to and from the Playhouse; the Streets will be lighted from the Playhouse to the Ball Room.

On September 12, the *Gazette* gives the following record of the performances and their result :—

On Wednesday Evening for the Benefit of the General Hospital were performed the Musical Entertainment of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penserosa* to a brilliant and Crowded Audience at the Theatre in King Street.

On Thursday Morning Mr. Handel's *Te Deum*, and *Jubilate*, together with the Coronation Anthem, and Dr. Boyce's Anthem, suitable to the Occasion, were performed at St. Philip's Church, after which a Collection was made, which the Countesses of Dartmouth and Aylesford very obligingly stood to receive at the Church Door for the Benefit of the Charity. And in the Evening Alexander's Feast. And on Friday Morning was Performed at St. Philip's Church the Sacred Oratorio of the Messiah, which met with the most distinguished Applause. The Concourse of Nobility and Gentry from this and the neighbouring Counties gave the whole a most Splended Appearance, and at the same time shewed their Desire to concur with the Inhabitants of this Place in support of a Charity so beneficial and extensive.

The Collection at St. Philip's Church with the Money received for the several Performances and Benefactions given on this Occasion amounted to near Eight Hundred Pounds.

The next advertisement announces a practice which has fallen into desuetude :—

General Hospital, Birmingham, April 24th, 1769.—Notice is hereby given, that a Public Board of Trustees of the said Hospital, will be held at the Swan Inn, on Tuesday the 2nd Day of May next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, where all Benefactors and Subscribers to the said Charity are particularly requested to attend on special Business.—JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

N.B.—Dinner will be put on the Table at Two o'Clock.

In September, 1770, the Theatre in King Street gave a night for the benefit of the Hospital. As this is the first performance given in the town for such a purpose, I quote the bill :—

For the General Hospital.—At the Theatre in King Street, Birmingham, on Friday Evening the 7th of September Inst. will be performed a Concert of Music. The Doors to be opened at Six and begin exactly at Seven o'Clock. Pit and Boxes laid together Three Shillings, Gallery One Shilling. Between the several Parts of the Concert will be presented Gratis, by a Company of their Majesty's Comedians from the Theatres in London, A Comedy called

THE JEALOUS WIFE.

Major Oakley, by Mr. Yates ; Mr. Oakley, Mr. Sherriffe ; Charles, Mr. Brereton ; Russet, Mr. Wrighton ; Captain O'Cutter, Mr. Edwin ; Sir Harry Beagle, Mr. Palmer ; Lord Trinker, Mr. Cooke. Mrs. Oakley, Mrs. Sherriffe ; Harriot, Mrs. Palmer ; Chambermaid, Mrs. Summers ; Toilet, Mrs. Kirby ; Lady Freelove, Mrs. Gloucester. With Dancing by Mr. Langlois and Miss Capon. To which will be added (by Desire) being positively the last Time this Season, a Comic Opera called

THE PADLOCK.

Leander, Mr. Moor ; Don Diego, Mr. Edwin ; Mungo, Mr. Palmer ; Ursula, Mrs. Palmer ; Leonora, Mrs. Wrighton. Tickets and Places to be had of Mr. Banks, at the Theatre, and of Aris, Printer. The Intention of the above Play being for a Public Charity, it is humbly hoped will be sufficient Reason for laying the Pit and Boxes together.

Hutton says in his very brief and meagre account of the Hospital, " That the amiable desire of doing good in the inhabitants, seemed to have exceeded their ability ; and, to the grief of many, it lay dormant for twelve years." This statement is unfortunately true. Mr. J. W. Showell, in a series of papers on the Early History of the Baptists in Birmingham which he communicated to the " Notes and Queries " of the *Gazette* in 1856, quotes an interesting local poem on this subject. He says :—

In 1774 the Theatre in New-street was built by subscription. The erection of the Theatre was impeded by no pecuniary obstructions, but was rapidly proceeded with and completed, whilst the Hospital stood a miserable object of ruin and dilapidation. Mr. Wilkes was determined to make an effort to arouse the curiosity and attention of the public by publishing the following

POETICAL DREAM.

Being a Dialogue between the Hospital and New Play-House, at Birmingham.

At close of day, within a rural bower,
I sat me down to muse away an hour ;
But nightly silence so profoundly deep,
Soon lull'd me into calm, and quiet sleep ;
And as I slept, I thought I heard a noise,
Then look'd around, and to my great surprise,
I saw the Hospital, and Playhouse near,
Both in profound discourse, which you shall hear.

HOSPITAL.

Hail, Playhouse, hail, thee I congratulate,
Whilst I bemoan my own bewildered state ;
Near seven years were my foundations laid,
Ere thine were dug, or ought about thee said,
Yet I've been long abandon'd human thought,
Whilst thou, in haste, art to perfection brought.

PLAYHOUSE.

Cease Hospital, why should'st thou thus repine ?
Though thou art neglected, 'tis no fault of mine ;
Thy use is hospitality, I know,
Or thou'dst been finished many years ago ;
My use thou know'st is different from thine,
In me the rich and opulent shall shine ;
But halt, and lame, and blind must be thy guests,
And such who are by sickness sore oppress'd.

HOSPITAL.

'Tis true, mine is an hospitable door,
And should stand open to receive the poor ;
The rich from me can no advantage gain,
Which causes me in sackcloth to remain.

PLAYHOUSE.

Well, stop awhile, I'll now demand of thee,
Shew me the man who e'er got aught by me ;
No good nor profit can in me be found,
My entertainments with expense abound.

HOSPITAL.

Oh, Epicureans value not expense,
When buying trifles to amuse their sense ;
But though I loudly their assistance crave,
Yet I, alas, can no assistance have.

PLAYHOUSE.

It must be wrong, I do in conscience own,
That such unkindness should to thee be shewn ;
That thou by Christians thus should slighted be,
Whilst I'm caress'd, and crown'd with dignity.

HOSPITAL.

Oh, Theatre, it is indeed, a shame,
That they should e'er be honoured with the name ;
Could Christians in a Playhouse take such pride,
Whilst I in dormancy so long abide ?

PLAYHOUSE.

Yes, Christians can ; pray do not go so far ;
I hope you do not think they heathens are.

HOSPITAL.

Indeed, they are no better in my view,
Or else they never could delight in you.

PLAYHOUSE.

Ah, that is certainly a grand mistake,
The best of Christians should their pleasure take.

HOSPITAL.

And so they do, but thou hast none to give ;
Their pleasure is the needy to relieve.

PLAYHOUSE.

If that's the case, then Christians are but few.

HOSPITAL.

Indeed, Theatre, that I think is true.
Sure I this gloomy aspect should not wear
If all were Christians who the name now bear.

PLAYHOUSE.

Well, be it so, I will no more pretend
To take their part ; let this contention end ;
Each pious mind, our gentry justly blame,
So I awoke, *and lo, it was a dream.*

After selling an immense number of copies, he found that it had so effectually answered his intention of awakening the attention of the Public to its object, that a subscription was immediately set on foot, and in a very short time the Hospital was finished and inhabited.

The impetus thus given to the Charity was followed up by renewed energy on the part of the Board. Hutton places this revival in 1778, but we shall see that it really begun in 1776. The following advertisement appeared on September 16 in that year :—

GENERAL HOSPITAL.

Birmingham, September 10, 1776.—Many Gentlemen of this Town and Neighbourhood, having taken into consideration the improper State in which the Building of the General Hospital at present stands, and being very desirous to see it answer the laudable Intention for which it was begun, do hereby Request a General Meeting of the Nobility and Gentry, as well as of the Inhabitants of the Town, at the HOTEL in Birmingham, on Friday the 20th of this Instant, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, to concert the most effectual Measures to prosecute the Undertaking, and speedily to render this charitable Design useful to the Public.

A State of the Accounts is preparing to be laid before them, together with an Estimate of what may be further requisite to make the Building fit for the Reception of Patients.

JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

On the 30th of the same month the following statement of affairs was published :—

Birmingham Hotel, September 20, 1776.—At a Meeting held here this Day in Pursuance of a public Advertisement, the state of the Accounts of the GENERAL HOSPITAL was laid before the Gentlemen then present, by which it appeared,—That the Money expended on the Building, contingent Expenses, &c. (including the Purchase of Land, £942, and Interest paid thereon to Christmas last, £359 3s. 8d.) amounted to									
to	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£6,853 13 1
That the Money already received for Benefactions, Subscriptions, &c., amounted to									
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,970 10 4

So that a Debt has been incurred of £2,883 2 9

This does not include any Charge for Interest, except that for the Land as above, and one Year's Interest, £200. Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd and Co., who are principal Creditors, will be content with 3 per Cent. per Annum for what they paid in Advance.

The Building is well executed on a large, extensive Plan, and capable of receiving upwards of 100 Patients, in the most commodious manner.—The Estimates of three different Builders were laid before the Meeting, by which it appeared that it would cost between £1,000 and £1,100 to complete the Building, exclusive of Furniture.*

It was then Resolved,—That a Subscription should be opened to compleat and furnish the Building for immediate Reception of Patients.

That it should be compleated and furnished before any Part of the Money subscribed be appropriated to lessen the Debts heretofore contracted.

That Mr. Thomas Westley and Mr. Michael Lakin be desired to superintend the Finishing of the Hospital, and keep the Accounts, to which they have consented.

That Application should be made to the Nobility and Gentry in the most proper Manner, and that the Inhabitants of the Town should be solicited to give their Aid and Assistance to bring this noble Charity into immediate Effect.

N.B.—The Gentlemen then present, and a few other Inhabitants of the Town, have already subscribed £740, besides what has been generously offered by some Noblemen and Gentlemen who are Friends to the Undertaking.

The next Meeting will be held at the Hotel, on Friday, the 4th of October, at Ten o'Clock in the Morning, when it is proposed to elect a Committee out of the Contributors, of whom seven are to form a Board.

JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

A collateral proof of the interest which the Hospital question was now exciting is afforded by this paragraph :—

November 18, 1776.—We hear that the following Question is to be debated in the Conversation Society at Mrs. Aston's in the Cherry Orchard, on Thursday Evening next,—“ Will the Establishment of the GENERAL HOSPITAL be most beneficial or injurious to the Town of Birmingham ? ”

* The Hospital was designed for one hundred patients, and was estimated to cost about £3,000. Mr. Vyse supplied the Committee with a plan, and they determined to be their own architects, merely engaging Messrs. B. and W. Wyatt to superintend the work, for which £150 was paid.

Contrary to the usual practice in such matters the *Gazette* of November 25 gives the result of this debate :—

On Thursday Evening last, at a numerous and very respectable Meeting of the Conversation Society, after a mature Discussion of the Question, it was the unanimous Sense of the Company, that the Establishment of the GENERAL HOSPITAL could not possibly be injurious to this Town, but on the Contrary would be of the utmost Utility, not only to Birmingham, but to its Neighbourhood and the Country in General.

We now come to the year in which Hutton tells us “the matter was revived with vigour.” On July 25, 1778, this advertisement was published and continued for some weeks :—

BIRMINGHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL.

The Hotel, May 19, 1778.—At a public Board of the Trustees and Benefactors of this Charity, held here this Day, in pursuance of the Advertisements inserted in the weekly Papers, the general state of their Affairs was laid before them and examined, and the success of the Trustees in their Application to the neighbouring Nobility and Gentlemen as well as the Inhabitants of this Town was given in.

When it appeared that such necessary Provision was made for the Discharge of the Incumbrances on the Hospital, and such sums were given in by Benefactions, as to justify the Trustees in the unanimous Opinion of the whole Assembly, immediately to enter on the Business of completing the Building, providing Furniture, and rendering the Hospital in all Respects fit for the Reception of Patients. And the Public are hereby informed, That these Benefactions are secured to the Purposes of completing and furnishing the Premises in the Manner above mentioned.

It was therefore resolved, That the Nobility and Gentlemen who have encouraged the Undertaking by their late Benefactions, be requested to pay the same into the Hands of Robert Child, Esq. and Co., Messrs. Hanbury, Taylor, Lloyd, and Boroman, Bankers in London; Messrs. Little and Co., Bankers in Coventry; or at Messrs. Taylor, Lloyds and Co., Bankers in Birmingham, between this Time and the Eleventh Day of July next.

A Committee of Nine Trustees was appointed at this Public Board, for the Conduct of completing and furnishing the Hospital with all possible Expedition. And the further assistance of the Public is earnestly requested by their Benefactions to this Charity, to render it of the most extensive Utility.—JOSEPH DALLAWAY, Secretary.

This year the Oratorios were given for the joint benefit of the Hospital and St. Paul's Chapel. The announcement was made on the 10th of August.

Birmingham, July 27, 1778.

Oratorios.—On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of September next, will be performed, for the Benefit of St. Paul's Chapel and the General Hospital.

At St. Philip's Church, on Wednesday Morning, in the Course of the Service, Handel's Grand Dettingen Te Deum Jubilate, and Dr. Boyce's Anthem, to conclude with Handel's Coronation Anthem. In the Evening, at the Theatre, in New Street, A grand Miscellaneous Concert, consisting of select Vocal and Instrumental Pieces, by the principal Performers,

On Thursday Morning, at St. Philip's, the Oratorio of Judas Maccabeus ; and in the Evening, at the Theatre, the Serenata of Acis and Galatea. Between the parts will be introduced some favourite Pieces.

On Friday Morning, at St. Philip's, the Sacred Oratorio of Messiah ; and in the Evening, at the Theatre, a grand Miscellaneous Concert, consisting of several capital Pieces, by the principal Performers.

Principal Vocal Performers, Miss Mahon, Miss Salmon, Messrs. Norris, Matthews, Price and Salmon.

Principal Instrumental Performers, Messrs. Crammer, Carvetto, Park, Ashley, Storacci, Jenkins and Mahon. And other Part of the Band, which will be very full, by the most approved Performers, and the celebrated Women Chorus Singers from Lancashire.

The Performers are desired to be in Birmingham in Time to rehearse on Monday Morning.

This Musical Festival excited great expectations ; and on August the 31st we read :—

The Appearance of Company at the approaching Musical Entertainments, which begin on Wednesday next, is expected to be both numerous and respectable, Lodgings we are informed being already engaged for many genteel Families ; and we have Reason to believe the Performance will be such as cannot fail giving universal Satisfaction, no Pains nor Expenditure having been regarded in selecting the most approved Performers, both Vocal and Instrumental.—Amongst the former, Miss Mahon's distinguished Merit deserves particular Notice ; she having received, at the last *Encoënia* at Oxford, and other polite Places, the highest Approbation of her Judgment and Execution.—Of the Instrumental, it may be thought sufficient to observe, that Mr. Crammer, the first Violin, has directed, for a considerable Time, with singular Honour and Ability, the most complete Band in the Kingdom, to perhaps one of the most Brilliant Audiences in Europe.—On the Clarionett, Mr. Mahon is said to have peculiar Excellence, and to stand unequalled by any Competitor.—In short, the Band, which is exceedingly full, is composed of Performers of great Eminence in the Parts in which they are severally meant to appear ; and the superior Powers of many, it is presumed, must be fresh in the Recollection of those who had the Pleasure of hearing them on a former similar Occasion in this Town.

Compared with the large sums realised by the Musical Festivals in our time, the amount obtained by these gatherings appears small. It is, however, creditable to the Musical taste of the town, that in the year 1778, £800 could be raised from such a source. The *Gazette* gives this account of the performances :—

September 7, 1778.—On Wednesday Morning last the Musical Entertainments for the Benefit of St. Paul's Chapel and the General Hospital, began in St. Philip's Church, when Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, Dr. Boyce's Anthem, and Handel's Grand Coronation Anthem, were performed to a Crowded and respectable Company with universal approbation.—On this Occasion an excellent Sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Young, in the Course of which he pointed out, in the most elegant and persuasive Language, the Necessity of a liberal and public-spirited Support of the Objects under Consideration, as tending effectually and essentially to promote the Interests both

of Religion and Humanity.—On the two succeeding Mornings, the Oratorios of Judas Maccabæus and Messiah were performed in the same Place, to very genteel Auditories, that of the latter being particularly so, and exceedingly numerous.—And in the Evening of Wednesday and Friday the respective Performers acquitted themselves with the utmost Reputation in the Miscellaneous Concerts; as well as in the Serenata of Acis and Galatea, which was exhibited on Thursday Evening.—The Produce of the several Entertainments amounted nearly to 800/.

In March, 1780, we have this report of the condition of the house and the number of patients at that time on the books :—

General Hospital, near Birmingham, March 20, 1780.—At a Public Board held this Day, George Birch, Esq., in the Chair;—Resolved that the Thanks of this Board be given to Mr. Mynors, Surgeon, for his frequent Attention and Assistance upon Extraordinary Occasions at this Hospital. Resolved that the thanks of the Board be given to Mr. Tomheys, of Bilston, for his generous Present of a Boat Load of Coals to this Hospital.

It appeared to this Board, that during the Half Year since the Opening of the Hospital the Numbers of Patients admitted into it have been

In Patients	143	Remaining in the House	39
Out Patients	132	Out Patients on Books	65

In the mean Time the Trustees have the Pleasure to observe, that the greatest Success has attended the Practice of this Hospital, Three In Patients only having died in the Half Year.

The Benefactions to this Charity, which have not yet been received, amount to more than 200/. It is therefore earnestly requested that they may be forthwith paid into the Hands of the Treasurer.

The next extract contains a pleasant fact in the History of the Hospital :—

The General Hospital, near Birmingham, December 18, 1780.—At a Public Board held this Day, Richard Moland, Esq., in the Chair, It was unanimously Resolved, That the Thanks of this Public Board be given to Charles Colmore, Esq., for his Generosity in accommodating this Charity with a Quantity of Land Gratis, for the Purpose of widening the Road to the Hospital.

On the 25th of June the public is informed “That a Sermon will be preached at St. Philip’s Church by the Right Rev. Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Chester, for the Benefit of this Charity, on Monday Morning, the 23rd of July.” On July 30, we have a short report of this sermon, and the amount it produced :—

Last Monday Morning, was preached at St. Philip’s Church in this Town, by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Chester, for the Benefit of the General Hospital, a most excellent Sermon. It was delivered with great Elegance, which showed him both the Orator and Man of Feeling, and had most uncommon attention paid to it by a very numerous and genteel Congregation. The Words of the Text were taken from the First Epistle of John, chap. iii, ver. 17, “But whoso hath this World’s good, and seeth

his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of *Compassion* from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?"—The Collection amounted to £128 6s. 1d.

In June in the following year an advertisement furnishes us with some very interesting facts in the early history of the Hospital :—

General Hospital, near Birmingham.—At a Public Board held on Monday, the 17th of June, 1782; Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., in the Chair. Resolved, that Mr. Henry Henn and Mr. James Taylor be desired to audit the Account of the present Year, and to prepare the Report to be laid before the Anniversary Meeting in September.

Upon an Examination of the Treasurer's Accounts it appears to this Public Board, that no Subscriptions from the Inhabitants of this Town are in Arrears, and also that very few from the Country remain unpaid, and these are mostly such as where the Distance from the Receivers and Correspondents may have rendered it troublesome or inconvenient to make their Remittances. This circumstance is mentioned as a singular Proof that the Subscribers feel a particular Satisfaction in giving every Support to this Charity, by a regular Payment of their Subscriptions.

The fluctuating State, however, of Annual Subscriptions, calls upon us to exert our Influence, that the Fund may not fail; it is therefore requested, that those Gentlemen of the Country, who, by their Liberality, have set an Example, will urge the Usefulness of this Institution to their Friends and Acquaintance: And as we are encouraged to hope for more Contributions from this Town, by many who have expressed a Disposition to promote the Charity, the Committee are desired to appoint some Gentlemen to make application to such as have not already subscribed, and that this be done as soon as possible, that the List of Contributors, which is to be printed before the next Quarterly Board, may appear the more respectable. Mr. Charles Hinckley, the Apothecary to this Hospital, having voluntarily given Notice that he intends to resign his Office on Michaelmas Day next. Resolved, That Advertisements be inserted in the public Papers, declaring that the Election of a House Apothecary, in the Room of Mr. Hinckley, will be on Monday the Sixteenth Day of September, being the next Public Board Day; and that all Persons desirous of applying to succeed to that Office, do signify their Intention by Letters, directed to the Committee of the General Hospital, near Birmingham.

It appears to this Public Board, that some Incurable Cases have lately been sent from Workhouses, which coming under respectable Recommendations have not been rejected, though they have been sent into the Hospital without necessary Change of Linen, and attended with many other disagreeable Circumstances, such as Vermin, the Itch, &c., to the great annoyance of other Patients. It is requested that Subscribers will consider such as improper Objects, particularly as it has been observed by the Visitors, that Patients of this class have generally behaved in an ungrateful, disorderly manner; and that after having received all the Relief which their cases could admit of, have remained a Burthen upon this Charity, notwithstanding repeated Applications have been made to the Parishes to remove them.

On September 16, in this year, a Sermon was preached at St. Philip's Church, by the Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, "for the Benefit of the General Hospital, near this Town." The Collection amounted to £89 18s. 9d.

At a meeting held on the 15th of December, we learn that "the general Conduct and Success of the Management of this Hospital was, upon the Review of it, much approved; and the Governors beg Leave to recommend it to the Further Patronage of the Public." Some anonymous person had drawn up an advertisement containing statements, we suppose, prejudicial to the management of the Charity, for on the same day the statement just quoted was made we have this notice: "The Advertisement sent us of a Publication entitled 'Anecdotes of the Birmingham Hospital,' we must decline inserting until we are favoured with the Signature of the Author, or of some other respectable Person. The money paid will be returned when sent for."

In 1784 a lady gave £500 anonymously to the funds of the Hospital, on which F. (our poet Freeth) wrote these curious and somewhat mysterious lines:—

November 15, 1784.

On a Benefaction of Five Hundred Pounds being presented to the General Hospital, by a Lady unknown.

Of Russel, though much has been said,
And the maidens the flowers have strew'd,
To say "the curnudgeon is dead,"
The epitaph—who can think rude?
With benevolence known to abound,
The virtue must be that excels;
Where no ostentation is found,
The essence of charity dwells.

The next statement made by the Committee is a very encouraging one; and shows how thoroughly the well-to-do people of the town and neighbourhood appreciated the good work which the Charity was performing. It was published on September 26, 1785:—

General Hospital, near Birmingham, Monday, September 10, 1785.—At a Public Board, being the Anniversary, The Rev. R. B. Riland in the Chair,—Resolved, That the Right Hon. Lord Middleton be elected President of this Hospital for the Year ensuing.

A Committee was appointed, as usual.

Resolved, That it appears to this Public Board, from the Auditors' Report, that *the Benefactions of late have been so extraordinary, as to have discharged the Debts which were due at the Opening of the Hospital, except the Mortgage of 700l. upon the land.*

Resolved, That the annual Subscriptions have received a considerable increase by the personal Application of several Gentlemen who lately undertook to solicit such of the Inhabitants of this Town as were disposed to encourage this useful Charity.

Resolved, That by the Economy and good Management which has prevailed in the House, it is evident that a large Number of Objects have received the Benefit of this Institution during the last Year, and it is expected that the Increase of them will require an enlargement of the Building, as soon as the Funds can admit of it.

It appears to this Public Board, that in future it may be proper to add a Column to the List of Subscribers, expressing what Number of Years any Subscriber may have omitted to have paid his annual Subscription, as is the Practice in several other Hospitals.

The resolutions passed at a meeting held on March 20, 1786, throw some light on the early working of this Charity and the care with which the Managers watched over its concerns. The three names mentioned in the first paragraph are famous ones in the history of the Hospital. The indisposition of Dr. Ash was happily not fatal, for that eminent benefactor of the town did not die until the year 1798.

General Hospital, near Birmingham, March 20, 1786.—Present Joseph Carles, Esq. ; in the Chair. Dr. Gilby having, by Mr. Hector, offered to attend this Hospital, as *Locum Tenens* for Dr. Ash, during his present Indisposition, and his Offer meeting the Approbation of the other Physicians attending the Hospital ; this Board agrees to accept such Offer from Dr. Gilby, and orders that he may be acquainted with the same, from the Chairman at this Board. Ordered, That the Thanks of this Board be given to Dr. Gilby, for his Offer to attend this Hospital as *Locum Tenens*, as above.

Ordered, That the Subscribers to this Charity be requested to attend to the Number of Patients they have a Right to recommend in each Year, in Proportion to their Subscriptions, as a greater number cannot be admitted.

It appears to this Board, that the Committee have often found themselves under the disagreeable Necessity of receiving into the Hospital some Patients whose Cases were judged by the Physicians and Surgeons as improper for this Charity, but yet coming from a Distance and being recommended by respectable Subscribers, the Committee have been unwilling to refuse them Admittance. Such Patients have remained an Incumbrance on the Charity for a few Weeks, and have at length returned Home, with very little benefit. It is much to be wished, that Subscribers would advert to Page 24, Rule 9th of the printed Book of Statutes and Orders for the Government of the Hospital, when they will find some particular Cases specified that are improper to be admitted, and which grow worse from the Confinement in the House. It would be proper that Subscribers who reside at a Distance, would request the Opinion of Some Medical Practitioner in their Neighbourhood, concerning the Propriety of recommending the Person that applies to them.

It is also to be understood, that this Charity is not instituted for the Reception of Cases wherein no considerable relief can be expected, and of Persons that are more fit for a Workhouse than an Hospital. It is well known, that some have been sent here who have been in so miserable a State, as in a few Days to be buried at the Expense of the Charity.

That the Thanks of this Public Board be given to John Taylor and Charles Taylor, Esqrs., for the Payment of a Legacy of Three Hundred Pounds, bequeathed to this Hospital, by their late Brother, William Taylor, Esq. ; by which Means the Governors have been enabled to discharge a Part of the Mortgage on the Premises.

Applications having been frequently made for the Supply of Linen Rags, and but very few having been received, it being found by the Reports published, that a considerable Expense is incurred by the Purchase of them, the Well-wishers to this Society will please to observe, that Presents of this Article will always be very acceptable.

On April 2, 1787, was published the report of a meeting of the Quarterly Board, in which it is said "This Meeting has the satisfaction to acquaint the Subscribers that they find every sort of regularity in the Hospital, and every success in the management of the sick and lame people therein, which can be expected."

"Since the foundation of the Hospital, the building has several times been enlarged, and additional land has been purchased. So far as can be ascertained, the number of beds in 1779 was one hundred; in 1792, by the munificence of Mr. Samuel Galton, thirty more were added; in the year 1830 twenty-eight additional beds were placed in new wards allotted to fever patients; and a further extension in 1842 raised the number of beds to 222. During the last year, 1857, a new wing—containing a lodge, a dispensary, physician's and surgeons' rooms, and other offices on the ground floor—was erected by the help of the funds derived from a *fete* in the grounds of Aston Hall. The upper portion of this wing supplies room for twenty more beds, raising the total number to about 240. These twenty beds and the furniture of the ward have been generously provided by Mr. J. C. Cohen, at his own cost."*

The following extract from the Eighty-seventh Annual Report, from Midsummer 1865, to Midsummer 1866, will bring the affairs of the General Hospital up to the latest date.

By far the most important subject which during the year has engaged the attention of the Board has been the erection (under the superintendence of a Building Sub-Committee, of whom Timothy Kenrick, Esq., is Chairman) of the Eastern Wing, including Two Wards of Twenty Beds each, with 1,600 cubic feet of space to each Bed; Dormitories for Twenty Nurses; and a spacious Out-Patient Department—accomplishing the greater portion of the reconstruction of the Hospital determined upon by the Quarterly Board after the visit of the Architect and Secretary to the principal Hospitals in the Kingdom and in Paris. After public competition, a tender for this Wing (including alterations to the main Building) was accepted on the 15th of September last from Messrs. W. and J. Webb for the sum of £7,885. The Building was commenced immediately afterwards, the Foundation Stone having been laid by the Right Hon. the Earl of Bradford (President of the Hospital) on Monday, 27th November last. A Public Luncheon took place at the Queen's Hotel, in the afternoon, to commemorate the event, at which

* The Birmingham General Hospital and Triennial Musical Festivals. By J. T. Bunce. pp. 70, 71.

the Mayor of Birmingham, Edwin Yates, Esq., presided, and about One Hundred Noblemen and Gentlemen, friends of the Hospital attended. After the Luncheon the handsome sum of £1,500 was subscribed in the room, in aid of the New Wing Fund. In consequence of the favourable state of the weather during the whole of the winter the Works have steadily progressed and are now rapidly approaching completion, and it is hoped that the Building will be opened before Christmas. The great gratification which has been expressed by all who have inspected this splendid addition to the Hospital has confirmed the Board in its conviction that this was, in every sense, a wise and necessary step. Inasmuch as the building of this Wing has of necessity involved the pulling down of the old Fever Wards (long known as the New Buildings), the accommodation of the Fever Patients has occupied the serious consideration of the Board and the Medical Staff. Many plans of a temporary nature had been suggested to meet the emergencies, but none seemed worthy of adoption; and it has been eventually determined, with the sanction of the Quarterly Board held in March last, to proceed with the erection of a new Western Wing, which includes Fever Wards, new Kitchens, a plan for remodelling the Basement, and for the conversion of the present Out-Patient Department into a Ward. The Board have felt emboldened to undertake this important work, and thus complete the long-hoped-for improvements which have been under consideration for many years, confidently believing that the public who have supported them so liberally hitherto, will, when they consider the urgent necessity for providing suitable accommodation for Fever cases, and see the progress of the Works come forward and contribute all that is needed to place this good and great Hospital in a thoroughly improved sanitary condition equal to the requirements of the age. The Board feel more strongly emboldened to adopt this course, inasmuch as (as will be hereafter seen) the ordinary Income and Expenditure have been very nearly equalized. Accordingly an Anonymous Friend, through Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, having promised the munificent Donation of £1,000 in aid of the Western Wing, and the sum of £1,200 having been announced from Donors to the Cotton Fund and others, tenders have been issued, and that of Messrs. W. and J. Webb, being the lowest in amount, has been accepted for the sum of £6,373, making, with Plumbers' work, a total of £6,831—and the Works are already commenced.

The approximate financial position of the Hospital, in reference to its reconstruction, is as follows:—

Contributions have been received and promised in aid of the Eastern Wing to the amount of £9,849; the sum of £7,108 has been expended on account of the works, including the erection of New Dead House, &c., the Balance due to the Contractors and others is £4,177, and there is consequently a sum of £1,036 to be provided for.

Contributions have been received and promised in aid of the Western Wing to the amount of £2,258; the sum of £32 has been expended for Appeals, &c., in aid of the object; the amount of the contract is £6,831, and there is consequently a sum of £4,604 to be provided for on this account.

The addition of a Chapel will hereafter be a most appropriate ending to the good works that have been in contemplation so long, and which are now on their way towards completion.

As respects the General Fund the financial prospects of the Hospital were never, for very many years, so highly encouraging and hopeful as they are at present. The Debt on this Fund, which at Midsummer, 1864, amounted to £8,864, has been

progressively reduced to £5,440 in 1865, and to £2,479 in the year ending July 1866, while the handsome sum of £1,106 remains to be invested at the next December Quarterly Board. Referring to the estimate made by your Auditors at page xviii of their last Annual Report, it will be seen that, although the *individual* items do not all come up to their estimate, the expenditure has been as nearly as possible about the sum therein set down, and that the deficiency of £6,403, also therein estimated, has been reduced by the Congregational Collections and other sources to £2,479, the amount of the present debt just stated.

The total number of patients during the year was 22,430; the average of the three preceding years being 29,874. The total gross receipts from all sources, except the Permanent Accident Fund and the Samaritan Fund, was £17,739—an amount which testifies most significantly that the town has lost nothing of that spirit of Charity which called forth the praises of strangers in the old time.

More than seventy years since a far-seeing philanthropist, whose name, alas! is not recorded, suggested that an Annual Collection should be made in all our churches and chapels for charitable objects. This admirable suggestion, after being carried out in a small way once or twice, slept until our own time, when, in 1858, it was revived by Dr. Miller, then Rector of St. Martin's Church. The time was now ripe for its successful application. An energetic and active committee was elected; ministers of all denominations cheerfully co-operated; and it was arranged that the Collections should be made on the last Sunday in October, and in the following order:—General Hospital every third year; Queen's Hospital every third year; and General Dispensary, Lying-in Hospital, Eye Hospital, Children's Hospital, General Institution for the Blind; General Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Homœopathic Hospital and Dispensary, Orthopædic Institution, Ear Infirmary, and Dental Dispensary every third year. The first collection was for the General Hospital, and took place in the year 1859; it produced £5,200 8s. 10d. The collections for the same institution in 1862 and in 1865 realised respectively £3,340 4s. 7d., and £4,232; making a total of £12,772 13s. 5d. added to the funds of the Hospital by this simple but most effective mode of raising money.

Thus step by step the Hospital grew and prospered. For more than a hundred years it has been engaged in the Samaritan work of healing the sick, and alleviating suffering. Hundreds of thousands have been

benefitted by its existence; and it has ministered to the relief of all the ills which flesh is heir to. To the poor it has been a blessing beyond price; and during the century of its beneficent existence the amount of sickness it has relieved, the health it has restored, the joy it has given to friends torn with grief and bowed down with fear for the lives of those near and dear to them, is beyond the power of the most active imagination to conceive. It was, and still is, the noblest of the many noble works of Charity which are the honour and glory of our Town; and this record of its origin and early growth cannot be without interest to all who delight in the progress of well-doing.*

The following is a complete list of the Musical Festivals, with the amount of receipts and the profits realised. It will be seen how enormously the Charity has benefitted by these famous gatherings:—

Year.	President	Receipts.	Profits.
1768	No President	£800	£299
1778	No President	800	170
1784	The Viscount Dudley and Ward	1,325	703
1787	The Earl of Aylesford	2,000	964
1790	The Viscountess Dudley and Ward	1,965	958
1793	No Festival, the Theatre having been burnt.		
1796	The Earl of Aylesford	2,044	897
1799	The Earl of Warwick	2,550	1,470
1802	The Earl of Dartmouth	3,829	2,380
1805	The Earl of Aylesford	4,122	2,202
1808	The Lord Guernsey	5,411	3,257
1811	The Earl of Bradford	6,680	3,629
1814	The Earl of Plymouth	7,144	3,131
1817	The Earl of Warwick	8,476	4,296
1820	The Earl of Dartmouth	9,483	5,001
1823	The Earl Talbot	11,115	5,806
1826	The Earl Howe	10,104	4,592
1829	The Earl of Bradford	9,771	3,806
1834	The Earl of Aylesford	13,527	4,035
†1837	The Lord Willoughby de Broke	11,900	2,776
1840	The Lord Leigh	11,613	4,503
1843	The Earl of Craven	8,822	2,916
1846	The Lord Wrottesley	11,638	5,508
1849	The Lord Guernsey, M.P.	10,334	2,448
1852	The Lord Leigh	11,925	4,704

* Some idea may be formed of the incalculable amount of good effected by the General Hospital from the fact that the total number of Patients received since its establishment, until 1866, has been 649,400; viz. :—In Patients, 120,745; Out Patients, 528,655.

† The sum of £1,200 was paid this year out of the Festival receipts towards lengthening the Town Hall.

*1855	The Lord Willoughby de Broke	12,745	3,108
1858	The Earl of Dartmouth	11,141	2,731
1861	The Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot	11,453	3,043
1864	The Earl of Lichfield	13,777	5,256

Total amount of Profits paid to the General Hospital, £84,589

The magnificent Organ, valued at upwards of £5,000, the cost of which has also been defrayed by the Festival Receipts, is the property of the Hospital.†

BIRMINGHAM CANAL NAVIGATION.

Without good roads and the means of speedy and convenient transit civilisation would be impossible. It is therefore one of the most certain signs of the progress which the people were making that in the middle of the eighteenth century, so much attention was paid to, and so much money expended in, making canals. This town was of all others most interested in such labours. Situated in the centre of England, and already renowned for the extent and variety of her manufactures, she must have felt most keenly the evils resulting from bad roads, and the want of a better method of transporting goods from place to place than the slow, tedious, uncertain, and lumbering wagons, or the equally slow, tedious, and uncertain pack horses. Accordingly the Manufacturers were ready to avail themselves of the silent roads, which were to our ancestors as great a change from the ordinary methods of transit, as railways have been to us. The first canal in England was made by Henry I., in 1134; it connected the river Trent with the Witham. For something like five hundred years scarcely anything more was done in the way of internal navigation. The New River canal was begun in 1608; but it was reserved for the eighteenth century to become the great epoch of canal making in England. From 1715 to 1799, no fewer than forty-five canals were commenced or completed. Birmingham joined in the work about the

* The sum of £1,000 was appropriated from the Receipts on this occasion towards lighting and decorating the Town Hall and Organ.

† A series of Papers on the Hospital and Triennial Musical Festivals, written by Mr. J. T. Bunce appeared in "*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*" in July and August, 1858. They were republished with additions, and to this very useful little volume the reader is referred for much interesting information on the history of the Hospital, the lives of its principal medical officers, the Musical Festivals, and the famous singers, who, since their foundation in 1768, have delighted so many generations of visitors.

middle of the century. On January 26, 1767, this advertisement appeared :—

The Utility of a Navigable Cut from the Wolverhampton Canal, through the Coal Works, to this Town, having been pointed out in a preceding Paper, by which, exclusive of the other Emoluments, it appears that the Town will reap a considerable Advantage in the Maintenance of its Poor, a Meeting for the further consideration of this Scheme is thought essentially necessary ; therefore the Constables, Churchwardens, and Overseers do hereby give public Notice, that a Meeting will be held on Wednesday next, at Six o'Clock in the Afternoon, at the Swan Inn in this Town, at which the Gentlemen and Inhabitants are solicited to attend in order (if the Scheme should be approv'd) that a proper Person be appointed to Survey and give an estimate of the Canal in Question, and that such other Proposals may be offered as may seem most likely to answer the intended Purpose.

The result of this meeting is given as follows :—

On Wednesday last, in Consequence of an Advertisement for that Purpose, there was a Meeting of a great number of the Inhabitants of this Town at the Swan, to consult about making a Navigable Cut from hence to run as near as possible thro' the Center of the Collieries, and to join the Wolverhampton Canal, when it was unanimously agreed to have it Survey'd, and a Subscription was open'd to carry it into Execution.

The great engineer Brindley was applied to, and the next thing we hear of the subject is a meeting at which he submitted his plans.

June 8th, 1767.

BIRMINGHAM NAVIGATION.

Swan Inn, June 4th, 1767.—At a numerous Meeting held this day, Mr. Brindley produced a Plan and Estimate of making a navigable Canal from the Town to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, through the principal Coal Works, by two different Tracts, and gave it as his Opinion that the best was from near New-Hall, over Birmingham Heath, to or near the following Places, viz., Smethwick, Oldbury, Tipton Green, Bilston, and from thence to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, with Branches to different Coal Works between the respective places.

As the Undertaking seems of great Importance, it is agreed that there be a Meeting appointed at this place, on Friday next the 12th Inst., at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon of the same Day, in order to open a Subscription to raise a Fund for the Expence of obtaining a Law, and completing the Work, which it is supposed will not exceed the Sum of £30,000 including all Expences. In the mean time Mr. Brindley's Plan, Estimate, and Opinion, and some Calculations of the Coal likely to pass, may be seen at Mr. Meredith's, Attorney at Law.

It is expected that a Committee for the Conduct of this Undertaking will be chuse at the said Meeting.

The supporters of this undertaking set to work with energy, for on July 15 we read :—

Birmingham Navigation, July 10th, 1767.—Whereas several numerous public Meetings have been held at the Swan Inn, to consider of a Plan for making a navigable Canal through the principal Coal Fields in this Neighbourhood by Smethwick, Oldbury, Tipton-

Green, and Bilston, in the Counties of Salop and Stafford, to join the Canal now making between the Trent and Severn, at Addersly, near Wolverhampton, Mr. James Brindley having made a Survey of it, estimated that the Expence would not exceed the Sum of £50,000 and on Friday the 12th Day of June last, in Pursuance of an Advertisement for that Purpose, a Subscription was opened to apply to Parliament for Powers to make such a Canal, and for compleating the same. There is already £35,000 subscribed; the Subscription Deeds will continue open at Mr. Meredith's, Attorney at Law, Birmingham, until the 26th of July Inst. unless the whole sum of £50,000 be sooner subscribed. At the same Place the proceedings of the Committee appointed for the Conduct of this application may be referred to. By Order of the Committee.

JOHN MEREDITH, Solicitor.

And in the paper of the same date we are told that "Upwards of £35,000 is already subscribed for making the Navigable Canal from this Town thro' the principal Coal Works."

On July 8, 1768, it is recorded that, "We hear the Bill for making a Navigable Canal from this Town to Wolverhampton, has passed both Houses, and only waits the Royal Assent." And on the 29th we read that "Last Friday (July 26,) on receiving the agreeable news that his Majesty had been at the House of Peers and signed the Bill for making the Navigable Canal from this Town to Wolverhampton, the Bells were set to ringing, which were continued the whole Day."

The works were at once proceeded with; not, however, without meeting with some of those disgraceful acts of violence which accompany all great public labours. Frequent notices like the following had to be published:—

BIRMINGHAM CANAL NAVIGATION.

Navigation Office, July 3, 1769.—Whereas considerable Damage hath been done to the Works and Tools belonging to this Undertaking, and many of the latter taken away or stolen. This is therefore to give Notice, that whoever will give Information of any Person or Persons concerned in injuring the said Works, stealing or secreting any of the Tools or Implements belonging to the same, shall, upon conviction of the Offenders, receive Ten Guineas Reward, by applying to Mr. Joseph Dallaway, at the Navigation Office, in New-Hall-Street, Birmingham.—And Whereas one George Wilson late a Cutter in the said Works, hath been guilty of breaking off one or more Locks belonging and affixed to the Bridges of the said Navigation, for which Offence he hath since absconded; whoever will give Information where he may be found, or secure him, so that he may be taken, or give Notice thereof to the said Joseph Dallaway, shall be amply rewarded by applying to him at the Navigation-Office aforesaid.

N.B. If any Person or Persons have or hath borrowed of the Clerks or Servants of this Company any Tools or Implements belonging to them, they are desired immediately to return the same, or, after this Notice, they will be prosecuted for withholding them.

Nor was it without its baptism of blood, for on July 24, we read that "Early on Saturday Morning last, a little beyond Winson Green, in the Birmingham Canal Navigation, the Earth fell suddenly in and Killed John Lester, one of the Workmen, occasioned, it is thought, by the heavy Rains on Friday Evening."

Poetry lent its divine aid to the undertaking. In the rhyming preface to his volume called the "Political Songster," Freeth thus alludes to the enthusiasm which this new venture had inspired :—

" But think not Politics alone,
Can in a large free trading town.
At this time fam'd for SPECULATION,
Engross the public conversation.
O'er chëering cups, as things fall out.
And false alarms are spread about,
Some grave appear, some gay, some sad,
And some are NAVIGATION mad."

On November 6, 1769, our old prolific rhymester made the following announcement :—

" Eighteen months have scarce run,
Since the work was begun :
How pleasing the sight !
What a scene of delight !
As the barges come floating along :
Then cease from your toil,
Nor hammer nor file
Be handled to-day,
All care shall away,
While bonfires are blazing,
(What can be more pleasing?)
All free-cost to gladden the throng."

After indulging in this vein for a considerable number of lines, Freeth adopts a different style, and thus joins Avon's jubilee with Birmingham's rejoicing. Two verses will suffice :—

" What mortals so happy as *Birmingham* Boys ?
What people so flush'd with the sweetest of joys ?
All hearts fraught with mirth at the Wharf shall appear,
Their aspects proclaim it the Jubilee year,
And be full as gay in their frolicksome pranks,
As they who were dancing on *Avon's* green bank.
There never in war was for victory won,
A cause that deserv'd such respect from the Town ;

Then revel in gladness, let harmony flow,
 From the district of *Bordesley* to *Paradise Row*.
 For true feeling joy in each breast must be wrought,
When Coals under Five-pence per hundred are bought."

From the bathos of the last line the poet passes into a strain of local patriotism which makes him prophecy, the truth of which must to Birmingham minds make up for its lack of poetry :—

" *Birmingham* for arts renown'd,
 O'er the globe shall foremost stand,
 Nor its vast increase be found
 To be equall'd in the land.
 If the will of fancy ranges
 From the *Tagus* to the *Ganges*,
 Or from *Lapland* Cliffs extend,
 To the *Patagonian* strand,
 For mechanic skill and pow'r,
 In what kingdom, on what shore,
 Lies the place that can supply
 This world with such variety?"

In such strains were the glory, greatness, usefulness, and wonder-working power of Canal Navigation sung to an admiring people. Descending, however, from the regions of fancy into those of plain fact, the same paper of November 6 contained this satisfactory paragraph, which fully bears out the vaticination of the bard, and brings us at once to the time "When Coals under Five-pence per hundred are bought."

It is with Pleasure we congratulate the Public on the probability of Coal being brought by Water near this Town in a few Days; and that the Canal Company have not only resolved to sell the same this Winter at their Wharf for Fourpence Half-penny per Hundred, long weight of 120lb., but to fix the Price of their Delivery in every Street thereof: and in order for the better accommodating of the Poor, they have determined to establish Coal-Yards in different Parts of the Town, as soon as possible, where it will be sold in Quantities so small as Half Hundreds, or less: and, indeed, there is great Reason to believe, that the Price of Coal will come (after the present Winter) cheaper than Four-pence Half-penny per Hundred; and that the Gentlemen who have the conducting of this important Affair, will use all possible Means to prevent Impositions of every Kind.

The next extract contains a little history in itself, and summarises a controversy which produced a great deal of writing, and not a little ill-feeling :—

December 4th, 1769.—On Friday last a numerous and respectable General Assembly of the Proprietors of the Birmingham Canal Navigation was held at the Swan Inn; and we have the pleasure to inform our Readers, that the following Resolutions

were then made, viz., "That the Thanks of the Company be returned to Mr. Bentley, for his great Care and Assiduity in the Conduct of the Company's Business; also, to Mr. Kettle, the Treasurer, and to the Gentlemen who have had the Conduct of the Wharf, for their Attention and Assistance.

"That a Gold Medal, of the Value of Fifty Guineas, with a proper Device upon it, be presented to Mr. Bentley, as a Testimony of the Proprietors' Approbation of the Services which he has rendered the Undertaking.

"That upon examining into the Particulars of a Misunderstanding which happened in the Committee between Messrs. Garbett and Bentley, it appeared, that Mr. Garbett did not intend to insinuate Mr. Bentley's having wilfully mispent any of the Company's Money, but always thought that he did his best; and (taking the whole of Mr. Bentley's Conduct into Consideration) that the Public were under Obligations to him. It likewise appeared that Mr. Garbett did frequently *request for the Poor* to be supplied with Coal, *in Preference to any Person whatsoever*, and that there is no Reason to say, he ever did make a Point for the Brass Work to receive the constant supply of Three Tons per Day: But there are many Reasons to believe that *Mr. Garbett did exert himself* for Coal being sold at *no more* than 4d. per Cwt. at the present, and *cheaper as soon as it was possible*, and that he never did desire any from the Wharf, either for his own Works or Dwelling House.

"That Mr. Bentley, their Chairman, be desired to present the Company's Thanks to Mr. Joseph Barker, for the important Services which he has rendered them, since his taking Charge of the Coal from the Pit Banks to the Wharf near this Town."

Many persons must have read this item of news with pleasure :—

April 9, 1770.—We hear from Newham, in Gloucestershire, that the Brigg Birmingham, John Morgan, Master, of that Place, is safe arrived there from Hilditch's Wharf, London, and is now taking in Goods in order to return back with all Speed.

The formation of canals led to the development of new industries, and Birmingham was not slow to use her advantages. Boat-building increased a thousand fold from the new demand. Boat Companies were formed who built or hired boats, and carried coal. On May 14, 1770, this advertisement was published :—

The Birmingham Boat Company take this Method to inform the Public, that they this Day begin selling Coal at Four-pence per Hundred Weight (six Score to the Hundred) on the Wharf at Birmingham aforesaid, where Teams may depend on a constant supply.

In July we read :—

Birmingham, July 23, 1770.—We have the Pleasure to inform the Public that the Birmingham Boat Company have invented a Method to weigh their Boats by Tubes, and by an Experiment made on Tuesday last, they weighed by Scales 30 Ton 9 Hundred into a Boat, and weighed them afterwards at the Proprietors' Machine, and the Difference was only 11 Pounds, which Invention is allowed to exceed any Thing of the Kind, and is an incontestible Proof of the Justness of the weighing Machine.

A successful scheme once set in motion is like a snowball rolling down a hill, it gathers in speed and volume as it progresses. So it was

with canals. They increased and multiplied rapidly, and Birmingham and the immediate neighbourhood did their share in the work. This extract tells us something of the activity displayed at this time :—

Birmingham, November 5, 1770.—We hear that the Country is surveying from the Coventry Canal by Coleshill, Castle Bromwich, Aston, Perry, Hamstead, and West Bromwich, to the Coal Pits near Wednesbury and Bilston, and to the Lime Pits near Walsall, and we are informed that a Canal in that Tract would very much reduce the Price of Coal and Lime in the Eastern Parts of Warwickshire, and the adjoining Counties; and that a Cut therefrom to Birmingham would occasion the Price of Corn to be cheaper than by Land Carriage. And if Attention should be given by Gentlemen of the Country it is supposed that any Schemes of Combination (in the Article of Coal or otherwise) to take improper Advantage of the Public, may in a great degree be prevented.

The managers of the Birmingham Company, however, had no easy time of it. They appear to have suffered, deservedly or not, an immense deal of opposition. The meetings called by fifteen of the shareholders, as allowed by the Act, were very numerous, and indicate a great deal of dissatisfaction somewhere. The charges of extortion, of oppression, and hard dealing are frequent, and sometimes the directors reply to them, but more commonly pass them by unnoticed. At last the subject is dealt with in a manner which might not be safely neglected. On November 19, 1770, this advertisement appeared :—

BIRMINGHAM CANAL.—To the Land-Owners near the Navigation between Birmingham and Bilstone.—There will be a Meeting at the Swan Inn, in Dudley, on Friday Morning next, the 23rd of this Instant November, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, to examine into the Manner with which the Birmingham Canal Company have conducted some of their Operations, and to collect an Account of such Hardships and Inconveniences as may appear likely to be redressed by Parliament, and to consider upon a proper Application to obtain such Alterations as may be to the common Good of the Country.

This meeting was followed by the reiteration of many charges against the managers, and on January 7, 1771, the following reply was given :—

BIRMINGHAM CANAL NAVIGATION.

Navigation Office, 4th Jan. 1771.—To the Public.—The Committee, from a Conviction that they have not intentionally done any Thing unbecoming the Characters of honest Men, either individually or in their collective Capacity, would have rested perfectly easy under their past Conduct, and the Assurances given to the Public in their Advertisements of the 7th, 8th and 14th of December last, regardless of the invidious Insinuations suggested against them in several anonymous Publications that have appeared in the public Papers; but as the Author of these Papers has at Length assumed his real Signature, they think it necessary only, to repeat to the Public their past Assurances of giving the most speedy Redress to all real Grievances, and of endeavouring to procure the

most essential Accommodations to the Public: And at the same Time to inform him, that they neither think themselves obliged, nor will in future give themselves any Trouble, to answer either his or the Publications of any other Individual, thinking themselves answerable only to their Constituents and the Public, to whom they are at all Times ready to account for their Conduct. By Order of the Committee,

JOHN MEREDITH, Clerk to the Company.

This, however, did not close the correspondence; the Committee were not powerful enough for this, but S. Aris was, and on the 22nd of the same month he published this "Notice to Correspondence," which, of course, put an end to the controversy.

Birmingham.—The Obligations I owe to my Correspondents demand from me every reasonable Compliance with their Requests; and I beg Leave to profess myself disposed to conform to them in every Instance where I am not materially injured, or the Public in general dissatisfied: But having received from my distant Friends a Variety of Complaints, that my Paper is filled with Disputes relative to the Birmingham Navigation, or other local Matters, which cannot be either interesting or entertaining to the Generality of my Readers, I hope I shall stand excused the future Admission of any private Dispute.

S. ARIS.

And so for a long time henceforward the Committee of the Birmingham Canal Navigation worked in peace.

THE ACT FOR "ENLIGHTENING AND CLEANSING THE STREETS."

The extracts which we have already given will have afforded the reader some idea of the bad state of the streets, and raised his astonishment that the inhabitants endured it so long. But custom and habit, use and wont are tyrants to whose despotism we not only willingly yield obedience, but resist the efforts made by others to free us from their power. The time, however, was nearly ripe, and in 1765 the subject was brought before the people, and a resolution to apply to Parliament for an Act was adopted. The felicitous word "enlightening" was used; but the lovers of darkness were not to be allured by the truth involved in a word. The opposition to this Act was the fiercest, the longest sustained, and produced the greatest agitation on the public mind of anything yet recorded in this century. Every stratagem was employed to defeat the object of its promoters. It was urged that it would be unjust to the poor, and partial to the rich; that it would encourage vice and wickedness, and that the friends of the

Act had better build churches. Like the modern zealots who advocate prayers for the removal of cholera and pestilence, instead of preventing them by providing good sewage, healthy houses, and well-ventilated courts, their predecessors in zeal thought a few churches would effect more good than widening, cleansing, and lighting the streets—which were mere secularities. As we shall see, the contest waxed wild and furious. The correspondence in the paper increased to an enormous extent, and from these letters, advertisements, and paragraphs, we are able to reproduce this active episode in the life of Birmingham a century back. The subject was first publicly mooted in an advertisement which appeared on February 4, 1765 :—

Birmingham, February 4th, 1765.—Whereas the Repairing, Cleansing, and Enlightening the Streets of this Town, will be of great Use and Importance, and tend to the Suppression of many Disorders therein, and to the Preservation of the Persons and Properties of the Inhabitants thereof; it is proposed to apply to Parliament this Session for an Act for that purpose: The Inhabitants of this Town are therefore desired to meet at the House of Joseph Cooke, Victualler, in the Cherry-Orchard, on Thursday next, being the 7th Instant, at Three of the Clock in the Afternoon, to consider of a Proper Application to Parliament for that Purpose, at which Meeting the following Plan of the intended Bill will be submitted to their consideration: That every Inhabitant, within the Town, who shall be seized of a real Estate of such Yearly Value, or possessed of a personal Estate alone, or real and personal Estate together, to such Amount as shall be then agreed upon, shall be Trustees for putting the said Act in Execution, who, or the major Part of them, being not less in Number than seven, shall have full Power to purchase Lamps, and to appoint Scavengers, Rakers, Lamp-Lighters, and other proper Officers, (with reasonable Salaries) and to remove them at Pleasure, and to issue out Orders, from Time to Time, for the Repairing, Cleaning, and Lighting the said Streets; and at their annual or other Meetings to appoint Assessors, who shall have Power to assess upon every Person holding or occupying any Messuage, House, Malthouse, or any other Building, or Garden Ground, within the said Town, (in the same Manner as the Rates for the Poor are usually assessed, or as near thereto as can be) any Sum, not exceeding one Shilling in the Pound, to be collected yearly, or oftener, as the Trustees shall direct, with Power to appoint yearly so many Collectors as shall be thought necessary, who are to take upon them the Office under a certain Penalty to be agreed upon, but not to be obliged to serve more than once in seven years, with proper and necessary Powers in the said Trustees to compel the assessing, collecting, paying, and applying the said Money for the Purposes aforesaid, and for settling and determining any Disputes relating to the said Act or the Execution thereof.

On the 11th this paragraph appeared :

We hear that the intended application to Parliament this Sessions for Lamps and Scavengers in this Town is postpon'd, on account of the Shortness of Time allowed by the Hon. House of Commons for receiving Bills, Saturday next being the last Day.

And so the subject fell into abeyance, and we meet with no reference to it again until December 19, 1768, when the following notice was published :—

A Meeting of the Inhabitants is desired at the Chamber over the Cross, on Tuesday next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, to consider of a Petition to Parliament for Lighting and Cleaning the Streets of this Town, &c.

The matter was now taken up in earnest, and on December 26, the following advertisement tells us of some of the changes which the committee proposed to make in the appearance of the town :—

The Committee appointed at the Meeting of the Inhabitants at the Chamber over the Cross,* on Tuesday, the 20th Instant, have unanimously agreed to petition Parliament for an Act to light and clean the Streets of this Town, and likewise to insert the following Clause, (viz.) to purchase and take down the House in the Bull Ring in the Possession of Francis Moles,† the upper Round-about House, and the Houses at the end of New-Street, belonging to Sir Thomas Gooch, and Henry Carver, Esq. ; ‡ to remove Nuisances in the Streets, and for the removal of the Beast-Market to Dale End ; the Money for the above Purposes to be raised by a Rate upon the Inhabitants, not to exceed Eight-pence in the Pound per Annum. A further Meeting of the Inhabitants is desired on Friday next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, at the Chamber over the Cross, to consider if any Thing further is necessary to be included.

But the war note was soon sounded. On January 2, 1769, a letter signed G. B. appeared, deprecating the attempt as premature and uncalled for, as contrary to the opinion of the majority, and advocating a subscription for doing the work instead of a tax—one more example of zealous and misdirected voluntaryism. The writer thus urges his opinions and his plans :—

Birmingham.—It appeared in this Paper last Week, that the Committee for enlightening and cleaning the Streets, &c., in the Town of Birmingham, had unanimously agreed to petition Parliament, for an Act to compel the Inhabitants to pay a Tax of Eight-pence in the Pound per Ann., and to solicit a Meeting upon the Friday following at the Chamber over the Old Cross. Before which Time the Inhabitants had weighed over what the Consequence of such an Act would be, and found that People in a middle Station of Life would be affected thereby, and their Posterity for ever taxed. A Majority appeared greatly dissatisfied with that Part of the Scheme of enforcing a Law to compel, when Numbers were ready to Subscribe to remove Nuisances.

It's reported that the Overseers of the Poor upon their Collection did, with Candour, ask Eighty-seven People, whether they would chuse a Taxation of Eight-pence in

* The Old Cross in the Bull Ring.

† This was one of the houses which surrounded St. Martin's Church, and was close to the gates opposite Moor Street. Mrs. F. Price, my mother-in-law, remembers it quite well. The bedrooms were over the gate and part of the walk by which the people went to church.

‡ These were two Round-about houses, the Upper and the Lower ; the latter was in the Little Bull Ring, and the former, which was to come down by this Act, in the Bull Ring.

the Pound per Annum, or not, when Eighty-one declared for no new Tax.—Should the Committee who have convened themselves think proper to assemble again in a Publick Manner, it's hoped those of the Contrary Opinion will appear to shew their general Disapprobation of their Project.

Hutton affords us some insight into the cause of much of the opposition which the attempt to procure this Act excited; and we regret to say that it was in his case, as doubtless in that of many others, a very selfish one. Our historian makes no concealment of the motive which influenced his conduct. In his autobiography, writing of the year 1768, he says "The Lamp Act came upon the carpet. Great opposition arose, *and more by my means than any other person's*; and that for an obvious reason. I occupied two houses which formed the gateway entering New Street, and they suited me: *both must come down if the Act passed*. All the terms the opposition could obtain, and which were all I wanted, after many hundred pounds had been spent, were that the buildings should not come down, nor be included in the Act."* A change in the circumstances, however, produced a change in the writer's feelings. Only four years later (1772), an amendment of the Act was asked for, and obtained in 1773. By this amendment, Hutton does not scruple to tell us, "My houses were to come down. It happened, that the old house, on the spot where my son now resides, was upon sale. I durst not let the opportunity slip, I considered it as a tool by which I must carry on my trade. I purchased it for eight hundred and thirty-five guineas. It was under mortgage for £400. I was obliged to pay the residue; and, as these premises would be open to New Street, if my two houses were removed, I now wished them down."† We are afraid that only too many measures for the public good are supported or opposed for similar reasons, although few are frank enough to give such an explicit statement of their reasons.

The activity of the opponents will be seen by the following statement, which appeared on January 16 :—

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham.—At a Meeting held at the Seven Stars, Birmingham, on Monday, the 9th Instant, to consult upon the Consequences of an Act now depending to compel the Inhabitants to pay an Annual Tax, not to exceed 8d. in the Pound, for Lighting, Cleaning the Streets, and removing Nuisances, it was thought

* The Life of William Hutton, p. 191.

† Ibid, p. 185.

such Act would not only be burthensome, but contrary to the General Sense of the Town. The Determination therefore was, that a fair Enquiry should be made of every Inhabitant thro' the six Districts or Quarters of the Town, who pay the Parochial Dues, whether they chuse or disapprove of the said Act. The Result of the Enquiry is as follows :—

				For the Act.	Against it.
First, or Edgbaston-street Quarter	...	...	...	19	279
Second, or New-street	...	...	...	60	167
Third, or Digbeth	...	...	...	43	126
Fourth, or Bull-street	...	...	...	73	241
Fifth, or Middle Town	not yet taken			...	...
Sixth, or Dale End	...	...	...	11	216

Great Numbers of the Subscribers for obtaining the Act, are, on mature Consideration, much against it. If this fair and Candid Enquiry is not sufficient to satisfy the Promoters of this Scheme, and they still persist to lay their Petition before the House, in order to obtain an Act, it is thought advisable, that a Subscription be opened immediately to endeavour to set it aside.

On January 23, this was followed by a second report, giving the results of a second canvass, which proved that wisdom does not always rest with the majority.

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham.—In the Paper of last Week, it appeared that in Consequence of a Meeting held at the seven stars, for Consideration of the Act for Lamps, Scavengers, and Removal of Nuisances, a fair and candid Enquiry had been made of the Inhabitants thro' five (out of the six) Districts of the Town, who pay the Parochial Dues, whether they approved or disapproved the said intended Act, and that the result of such Enquiry was,

For the Act	Against it
206	1029

The sixth District hath since been taken, and the Number now stands :

For the Act	Against it
237	1236

The Result of this second Enquiry being reported to a Number of the Principal Inhabitants, at a Meeting held at the New Tavern on Thursday last, and it appearing that the general Voice of the People is against the Act, it was thought advisable to open a Subscription to prevent such Act passing into a Law, which was accordingly done and very liberally subscribed to, an Example that 'tis hoped will be followed by all who are inclinable to defeat so oppressive and ill-judged a Scheme.

In the same paper in which the above report appeared is a letter from a correspondent bearing the initials T. F., showing the stratagems resorted to by the canvassers, and pointing out the true meaning and intention of the Act. It is one of the calmest letters written on the subject :—

January 23, 1769.—To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham. A Great Noise and Clamour has been raised through this Town by a few Individuals, respecting

the intended application to Parliament for Lamps, Scavengers, and removal of Nuisances, and a pretended Canvas was made for the true Sense of the Inhabitants ; I am informed their Enquiry was very unfair, being only asked if they were for a perpetual Tax of Eight-pence in the Pound, not specifying the Advantages to be received ; and a great many Names were put down contrary to the Inclinations and express orders of the different Persons ; and at the same Time the true State of the Case was not known to a great many to whom the above application was made : 'tis thought proper by this Method to set the Case in a clear and concise View to the Public. A Meeting was desired, by public Notice in the Churches upon Sunday the 28th of August, to be held upon the Tuesday following, when it was the unanimous Voice of the Persons present, that the present intended Application should be made ; and a further Meeting advertised, and was ordered agreeable to their Desire. A great many Persons met in Consequence of the said Notice, and it was their unanimous Opinions that a Subscription should be immediately set forwards, and those present subscribed each a Guinea, to the amount of Fifty, and several Persons went about the Town for a further Subscription, which met with the greatest Encouragement ; another Meeting was afterwards appointed, when about four or five Persons appeared against the intended Bill : but so great a Number being for it, a Committee was appointed of the most respectable Persons in Town, to consider what should be applied for, and the intended Application was confined to the under-mentioned Particulars ; that Power be petitioned for a Rate upon the Inhabitants not to exceed Eight-pence in the Pound per Annum, Two-pence of which is to be appropriated towards the Removal of Nuisances, and Sixpence for Lighting the Streets : the above Two-pence will be entirely dropt, when the following Buildings are removed, which will not exceed six Years, and may be very reasonably expected to be purchased in four Years ; the Buildings to be removed are the Old House in the Bull-Ring, leading to the Church-Yard, the upper Round-about House, and to open the Way into New-Street.

To remove the Nuisances that remain in the Street, such as, lately, that before Mr. Luke Bell's Door, which lay Six Months in the principal Street, and entirely obstructed the Foot Way. A small Fine to be levied after Notice upon Continuance.

To oblige the Drivers of all Water-Carts,* and others carrying for Hire, to have a Halter to the Head of the Shaft Horse, by which he shall be led when passing through the Streets of the Town ; to have the Houses in each Street Numbered and Painted, upon the Door, or Door Posts ; and to have the Beast Market removed from the High-street to Dale-End ; these are the Clauses intended to be introduced into the Bill ; and though a Power may be obtained, that 6d. in the Pound may be levied, it is expected, that not above Four-pence in the Pound will be wanted, for Lighting the Streets ; and no impartial Person can imagine, that any one that rents a House of Eight Pounds a Year, can think it a great Burden to pay Four Shillings per Annum, if the Whole is collected, and if Four-pence in the Pound will be sufficient, no more than Two Shillings and Eight-pence per Annum will be required, and all other Houses in Proportion ; and the Public Advantage of having lighted and clean Streets, will more than compensate for the Payment.

T. Z. in a letter of February 6, states that a messenger was sent by the opponents of the Act to its supporters, "requesting they would

* Till very recently numerous water-carriers were employed in selling Digbeth and Lady Well water through the town.

withdraw their Petition, and waive all Proceedings till next Session of Parliament; in the Interim the fresh Plan might be laid before the Town for their Consideration." The writer defends the conduct of the Opposition, whose "principal Motive of Action was an Endeavour to preserve them and Posterity from that heavy Tax." The next Opposition letter appeared on February 13, and is such a fine specimen of its kind that every one will be glad to read it entire; we therefore quote it *verbatim et literatim*. It is without any signature.

As much Altercation has lately prevailed on the Propriety and necessity of obtaining an Act for enlightening the Streets, &c., permit me to trespass a little upon the Attention of your Readers on that Subject, being actuated by no other Principle than an ardent Zeal for the Welfare and Prosperity of the Town; abstracted from the least Degree of Prejudice or Self-Interest. This being premised it may be proper to consider, that this is a Place whose very Dependance is on the Sale of its Manufactures, which are vended in all parts of the commercial World; and that the cheaper they are carried to Market, the greater will be their Consumption: The present flourishing state of its Manufactures is looked upon with a jealous eye by many Foreign Nations; it, therefore, highly concerns us to watch over them with the greatest circumspection, and take all possible Care to preserve them. For this Reason it appears highly impolitic to increase the Expence of its Inhabitants by any additional Impost or Expence whatever, without any absolute necessity. But as this does not appear to be the Case, from Experience of the Town having hitherto subsisted without Lamps, and that perhaps fewer Robberies or Accidents have happened to its Inhabitants, than any other Town for its Size and Numbers of People, which may perhaps be in Part ascribed to its want of Lamps; for as according to the Proverb, "Opportunity makes a Thief," so Lamps frequently give a Villain an Opportunity of perpetrating Mischief, which is prevented by Darkness, and his fear of being observed prowling about the Streets with a Light; and this seems to be verified by the City of London, which is watched and lighted at a very great Expence, yet, nevertheless Robbery and Mischief is very frequent there, for the Truth of which I appeal to the daily Papers. For my Part, I am amazed that People should be desirous of enslaving themselves and their Posterity by a perpetual Act of Parliament, and this too at a Period when the rest of Mankind are in full Chace after every shadow of Liberty; but more especially People who have been so long accustomed to the most unbounded Liberty, unrestrained from those Shackles incorporate Towns have loaded themselves with, and which has contributed so great a Share towards their present extensive Trade and still increasing Greatness. If, after all, the Interested, or the Wealthy, are still desirous of having those proposed convenient Improvements, let a voluntary Subscription be opened for carrying these Schemes into Execution. and let them show their zeal by their liberal Contributions, and not enforce Money against their Neighbour's Inclination or *Abilities*, for the Conveniency of lighting the Affluent or Extravagant Home from Taverns and Ale-houses in dark Nights: It certainly would be infinitely better to promote, both by Precept and Example, a true Sense of Religion, Sobriety, Temperance, and other Christian and Moral Virtues among the People, than any luxurious extravagance; and what can be more conducive to this good Purpose, than giving

opportunities of frequently attending upon the Service of the Great Creator of the Universe, whose Almighty, providential Care, preserves, supports, and governs the amazing whole! But it is greatly to be lamented, that Places for his Divine Worship, according to his established Church, have not adequately increased with the number of Houses and Inhabitants; wherefore I pray that this Deficiency may be properly considered, and that a respectable Association may be immediately formed, for promoting so good and so useful a Work; and I beg leave to recommend the following Sketch of a Plan for the Execution of it to serious Consideration, viz. Let an Act be procured for separating two Parishes, and to lay a *temporary* Duty of 3d. in the Pound, to be paid by the Proprietors of all Lands, Rents, and Hereditaments whatsoever, throughout the whole Parish; which together with the voluntary Subscription of the Tenants, and other well disposed Persons, would be sufficient, in a few years, to purchase two large Pieces of Ground for burying the Dead, and erecting two stately Edifices, to the Honor and Glory of God, the Ornament of the Town, and the eternal Felicity of Thousands unborn. The Seats in the Church, and Parochial Dues, would handsomely endow them, without any other Assistance from the Inhabitants. But though this scheme may not be readily embraced by the Avaritious, yet I hope (as by this Plan none will contribute any Thing but what they are really able, and that it is but reasonable Landlords should contribute something towards building Places for Divine Worship for the Use of their Tenants) all their Efforts against it will be ineffectual.

I am, Yours, &c.

In March John Freeth gives us this Epigram:—

On the BILL depending for removing PUBLIC NUISANCES.

EPIGRAM.

Wonder not that this Contention,
Feuds and Jealousies create;
Envy, Discord, and Dissention,
Are true Copies of the State.

The greatest Nuisances we want
Fairly from the Land to shove,
Are worse than any Town Complaint,
And ev'ry Day are seen above.

J. F.

In this month another meeting of supporters and opponents was held, records of which are given in the following advertisement:—

Birmingham, March 25, 1769.—In Reply to the Hand-Bills, circulated this Afternoon, relative to a Bill now depending in Parliament for Lamps and Scavengers, &c., as well as to a Meeting on Thursday last, at the Castle Inn, the Public are desired to Remark, that the Gentlemen of the Opposition were requested to shew their Objections, wherein any of the Clauses required Amendment, or new ones to be added; and told that the friends thereof were ready to comply with any reasonable Proposal towards effecting an Accommodation: Notwithstanding this, the Opposers made no particular Objection, but for Answer declared, in general Terms, that they would have no Bill at all. After some Altercation with one of the Friends of the Bill (unknown to the rest, except John Taylor, Esq., and Dr. Ash, who did not then attend as Part of the Committee) the Opposers proposed that a new Canvass of the Town should be taken, which indeed was unani-

mously objected to by the Committee, when acquainted therewith, and that for the following Reasons, viz.—

Their having already taken the Sense of the Town at several public Meetings appointed and held for that Purpose, in the usual Manner; at all which a very considerable Majority appeared in Favour of the Bill.

The Time for determining its Fate was considered likewise to be so short, that it was impossible to obtain a fair and impartial Canvass of the Inhabitants in so populous a Place, especially as the Opposers had taken every disingenuous Method to prejudice them against it.

Those who are well acquainted with the Frailties of Human Nature, must be sensible how difficult it is to exterminate any Prepossession which the Mind has once imbibed, even though they should consist of the most palpable Errors.

Having removed every Objection which could reasonably be urged against the Bill, and being conscious that its Merit would stand the Test, we judged it highly imprudent to give up those Advantages for a plausible Proposal, so manifestly mis-timed, and which we considered to have been calculated with no other View than to protract the Issue of it. So sensible indeed of this was a principal Person in the Opposition, and apprehending that Lord Beauchamp saw the impropriety of their Proceedings, he was induced to request the Favour of his Lordship to remain neuter in the Affair; and to which we added that of ours, in order to prevent his Lordship's having any further Trouble on the Occasion.

The Petitioners for the Bill believe this to be a just Account of last Thursday's Meeting. They totally disavow any arbitrary and oppressive Intentions with regard to their Neighbours. They rest their cause altogether upon its own Equity. If they are so happy as to receive the Countenance of Parliament, they will have a Satisfaction from thence, proper timed to the many Benefits which they flatter themselves the Town in general will reap from the Bill: On the contrary, if it should become a Sacrifice to private interest and groundless Clamours, they will never the less have left a Consciousness in the Rectitude of their Views, and their Disappointment will only be an additional Instance to many others, of the best Plans failing of their deserved success.

The opposition was, however, unsuccessful. Common sense was on the side of the petitioners, and this time common sense prevailed. On April 24, 1769, the pleasing news was inserted, that the Act had been passed by the Commons :—

By private Letters from London we hear that the long depending Act for Lighting, Cleansing, and removing Nuisances, &c in this Town, had passed in the House of C——s, on Friday last and that the Division upon this Occasion, which was expected to be very considerable, could scarcely be reckoned one, there being but one negative Voice in the whole Assembly.

On May 1 the public were informed of the final carrying of the Bill. “We hear from London, that on Thursday last the Bill for Lighting and Cleansing the Streets in this Town, was read in the House of Lords, and that it now lies ready for the Royal Assent.” Next week the commissioners published an Abstract of the bill,

containing the names of the first commissioners, by which it will be seen that all the friends of intelligence were supporters of this measure. In this list are some of the best remembered names, and some of the most notable men in our history. Dr. Ash (the founder of the General Hospital), Baskerville (the famous printer), Cope, Freer, Lloyd, Galton, Russell, and others not yet forgotten. The latter part of this abstract brings vividly before us the great alterations made, and the numbers of old houses taken down by the operations of this Act. New Street is to be widened; the buildings projecting into High Street to be taken down; the Upper and the Lower "Round Houses" pass from our history; houses by St. Martin's Church are to be taken down, and many of those alterations are to be made which have entirely changed the appearance of the place, and which have since been carried on with ever accelerating speed, until Old Birmingham has been almost lost in the embraces of the modern town. The document is full of local interest.

May 8th, 1769.—ABSTRACT of "An Act for Laying Open and Widening certain Ways and Passages within the Town of Birmingham; and for Cleansing and Lightening the Streets, Lanes, Ways, and Passages there; and for Removing and preventing Nuisances and Obstructions therein."

The Commissioners appointed for putting this Act into Execution, are John Ash, M.D., Wm. John Banner, John Baskerville, Samuel Bradbourn, Thomas Bingham, James Butler, Samuel Baker, Henry Carver, Esq., Francis Coals, Thomas Careless, John Cope, Thomas Faulconbridge, John Freer, Samuel Freeth, John Ford, Samuel Garbett, Esq., Samuel Galton, Richard Goolden, John Gold, Samuel Harvey, Gregory Hicks, James Jakson, John Kettle, Sampson Lloyd, Senior; Sampson Lloyd, Junior; Michael Lakin, Thomas Lutwych, Thomas Lawrence, William May, Benjamin Mansell, John Moody, John Oseland, Thomas Pemberton, William Russel, John Ryland, Thomas Russell, Richard Rabone, John Smith, William Small, M.D., Joseph Smith, John Taylor, Esq., Joseph Thomas, John Turner, Senior; John Turner, Junior; Joseph Wilkinson, William Walsingham, William Welch, Elias Wallin, Joseph Webster, and Thomas Westley.

The Commissioners, or any seven or more of them, to appoint such and so many Scavengers, Rakers or Cleaners of the Streets, Lanes, Ways, Passages, and Public Places within the said Town, and such Keepers and Lighters of Lamps, &c., as they shall think proper. That every Person and Persons inhabiting within the said Town, shall from and after the Tuesday Fortnight after the Passing of this Act, sweep or cause to be swept and cleansed the Streets, &c., before or on the sides of their respective Houses, Warehouses, &c., once in every week, on Fridays, between the Hours of Six in the Morning and Two in the Afternoon, or upon such other Days and at such other Times as the said Commissioners shall appoint, and Collect and put together such Dirt, &c., in the said Streets, in Readiness for the Scavenger to take away, under Forfeiture of one

Shilling for every Neglect. That the Commissioners may compound for cleaning the Streets. That all Spouts and Gutters belonging to, and conveying Water from, the Tops of Houses, &c., shall, within nine Calendar Months, after the Passing of the Act, be removed, and the water conveyed by Pipes down by the Sides or Fronts of such Houses, &c., to be done at the Expence of the Landlords. All Nuisances to be removed upon Notice. Stalls to be removed after Saturday's market before Twelve o'Clock at Night, on Penalty of One Shilling for each Neglect. All Carts, &c., shall be conducted by the Driver, having a Halter to the Shaft Horse in his Hand, upon Penalty of 2s. 6d. Names of Streets, Lanes, &c., to be affixed on the Corner Houses of such Streets, &c., and the Houses to be Numbered with Figures placed on the Doors thereof. The Cattle Market to be confined between Dale-End and Chapel Street; any Person exposing Cattle in any other Part of the Town to forfeit for each 5s. Commissioners may contract for Lamps, &c. Any person convicted of damaging them, the first offence, 20s., second, 40s., the third and every other 5*l*.; one Half to the Informer, and the other to the Commissioners. Commissioners may yearly, under their Hands, nominate and appoint six or more inhabitants to be Assessors; Persons who rent to the yearly Value of 6*l*. and under 10*l*. shall be rated at any Sum not exceeding 2d. in the Pound in one Year. Persons who rent 10*l*. and under 15*l*. any sum not exceeding 3d. Fifteen Pounds and under Twenty, not exceeding 4d. Twenty Pounds and under Twenty-five, not exceeding 6d; Twenty-five Pounds and upwards, any sum not exceeding 8d. in the Pound.

Rates recoverable in the same Manner as Parish Rates. St. Martin's and St. Philip's united as to this Act. Expences of this Act to be repaid to the said Commissioners out of the Monies raised by virtue thereof. Any Person may appeal against the Rates at the Quarter Sessions, in Case of Aggrievance. The following Buildings are to be taken down, in Pursuance of this Act; At the Entrance into New-Street; four Tenements fronting the High-Street; two of them in the Occupation of W. Hutton, one of Jn. Greaves, and one of Th. Brueton, with five Tenements backwards, in the respective Occupations of John Terry, Catharine Wright, Magdalen Hansard, Richard Walford, and John Ensell. The front towards the High-Street (including the present Passage about 12 Feet,) being about 64 Feet; the Front towards New-Street about 70 Feet; the West Side to the Alley about 33 Feet; the South Side to the Alley, and projecting into the High-Street, about 55 Feet.—The Upper Round-about House, in the Occupation of Samuel Willets or his Under Tenants; on the North Side, or Front, about 19 Feet; on the West Side about 25 Feet; but including the Projection on the West Side is about 28 Feet; on the South Side about 19 Feet; and on the East Side about 28 Feet.—The House fronting the Corn Market, in the Occupation of Francis Moles; the Front towards the Corn Market, about 15 Feet; on the Side towards the Passage leading into St. Martin's Church-Yard, about 30 Feet; and the Back Part thereof, towards the said Church-Yard, about 15 Feet.—That, from and after the Tuesday Fortnight after the Passing of this Act, the said Commissioners, or any Seven or more of them, shall have full Power and Authority to treat and agree with the Owners and Occupiers of and all other Persons interested in, the Houses, Buildings, Grounds and Estates thereunto annexed, and to purchase and become seized and possessed of the same; and, upon Payment of such Money, to cause such houses to be pulled down.

Our next extract is the report of the first meeting of the Commissioners :—

May 22, 1769.—At the first meeting of the Commissioners nominated and appointed for putting in Execution an Act for laying open and widening certain Ways and Passages within the Town of Birmingham, and for cleansing and lighting the Streets, Lanes, Ways and Passages there, and for removing and preventing Nuisances and Obstructions therein, held this Day at the Castle Inn, IT WAS RESOLVED, That, in order no one may plead Ignorance of the Law, the following Advertisement should be inserted, and it is hoped a due attention will be paid thereto, as the Commissioners are determined in every Respect to put the said Act into Execution.

Commissioners Present.

Samuel Garbett, Esq., in the Chair.

Joseph Smith	Michael Lakin	Sampson Lloyd, junior
John Ash	Thomas Bingham	John Ford
John Freer	Thomas Lutwych	William Walsingham
Thomas Faulconbridge	John Moody	James Butler
Richard Rabone	Joseph Thomas	Thomas Westley
John Turner, senior	William May	Elias Wallin
John Turner, junior	John Cope	Joseph Wilkinson
Samuel Galton	Thomas Lawrence	John Kettle
Samuel Bradbourn	Thomas Russell	Richard Goolden
Joseph Webster		

It is by the said Act directed, that, for the future, that Part of the Street called Dale-End, which is between the House now in the Occupation of Clement Satterthwaite and the end of Chapel Street, and not elsewhere, shall be the Place for holding a Market for Neat Cattle; and if any Person shall expose to Sale any Neat Cattle in any other Part of the said Town, every such Person shall, for every such Neat Cattle so exposed to Sale, forfeit the sum of Five Shillings.

IT WAS RESOLVED, That this Regulation be dispensed with, 'till Thursday, the 25th Inst. and that the Town Cryers do publish the same by Bell on the Fair Day, and the two following Thursdays, and that the Beadles do attend in the High Street on Thursday the 25th Inst. and on Thursday the 1st of June next, to prevent Country People incurring the Penalty through Mistake.

RESOLVED, That unless Annoyances are removed as the Act of Parliament directs, the Offenders will be immediately proceeded against.

RESOLVED, That the Commissioners do meet at the Castle Inn, on Tuesday next the 23rd Inst. at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon, when they will be ready to receive Proposals from any Person or Persons inclined to fix Names at the Ends of the Streets, and Number the Houses. By Order of the Commissioners,

THOMAS STEWARD, Clerk to the said Commissioners.

In June 1771 was advertised the fact that the first year's lamp accounts were made up and settled.

And that all Persons desirous of inspecting the same are to apply to the Treasurer, at the Lamp Office, No. 16, Spiceal-Street, between the Hours of Two and Five of the Clock in the Afternoon of this Day and To-morrow. By Order of the Commissioners.

THOMAS STEWARD, Treasurer.

The Act as first obtained was found inadequate for its wants ; and on February 3, 1772, this notice was published :—

The Commissioners for putting in Execution the Act for Cleaning and Lighting the Town, intend applying to Parliament this Sessions to enlarge the Powers thereof.—Therefore the Inhabitants are desired to meet at the Chamber over the Old Cross, on Wednesday next at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, when the Heads of the Bill for enlarging such Powers will be laid before them for their Consideration. By Order of the Commissioners of Lamps.—THOMAS STEWARD.

On the 25th of January in the following year the public were informed that :—

The Commissioners acting in pursuance of an Act of Parliament passed in the Ninth Year of the Reign of his present Majesty, for Lighting and Cleaning the Town, will apply to Parliament this Session to enlarge the Powers and Authorities thereby given. All Persons desirous of knowing what further Powers are intended to be obtained, may inform themselves by having recourse to the Clerk of the Commissioners, at his Office, No. 31, New Street. By Order of the Commissioners.

THOMAS STEWARD, Clerk.

The inhabitants were themselves making efforts to improve the streets, as we find by this advertisement :—

March 29, 1773.—The several Subscribers to the Paving of Bull-Street within this Town, are requested to give their Attendance on Wednesday next, at the House of William Southall, known by the Sign of the Swan in the said Street, at Seven o'Clock in the Evening, to take into Consideration the best Method of executing such Pavement, and to chuse a Committee for the Conduct of the Work.

On April 5, we learn that “The Bill for Paving, Lighting, and Watching this Town, and for widening and laying open certain Ways and Passages, has passed the House of Commons.” It also passed the Lords very quickly, for on the 7th of this month it received the Royal assent. It was entitled a “Bill for laying open and Widening certain Ways and Passages within this Town ; and for cleansing and lighting the Streets, Lanes, Ways, and Passages ; and for removing and preventing Nuisances and Obstructions ; and for widening certain Streets and Places ; for establishing a Nightly Watch ; and for regulating Carts and Carmen.”

The commissioners soon proceeded to exercise their new powers ; and the following advertisement will indicate how great were the changes which were wrought in the aspect of the town by carrying out the provisions of this bill :—

June 7, 1773.—The Commissioners appointed by or acting in Pursuance of the several Acts of Parliament lately Passed for laying open and widening the Streets, Ways, and Passages in Birmingham aforesaid, mentioned in the respective Schedules to the said Act annexed, and for other Purposes therein mentioned, do hereby give Notice, (according to the Directions of the said Act, or one of them,) that they intend to treat with the Proprietors of the Houses and Buildings, situate at the End of New-Street, and in the High-Street, now or late in the respective Occupations of Mr. Wm. Hutton, John Greaves, John Terry, Catherine Wright, Magdalen Hazard, Richard Walord, and John Ensell, for the Purchase of the same, or so much thereof as they shall think necessary to be taken down, in order to render the Entrance into New-Street safe and commodious; and any Persons willing to advance Money upon the Credit of the Rates by the said Acts directed to be raised, or to purchase Annuities out of the same, are requested to apply to the Commissioners, at the Office in Spiceal-Street, on Wednesday next, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, and the Wednesday following at that Time, or to their Clerk, at No. 31, New-Street, in Birmingham aforesaid.

By Order of the Commissioners.

THOMAS STEWARD.

In 1780 another application was made to Parliament for the purposes contained in the following notice :—

Birmingham, Monday, February 14, 1780.—On Monday last, a Petition, signed by sixteen of the Commissioners of Lamps and Scavengers in this Town, was presented to the House of Commons, praying for Leave to bring in a Bill to empower them to take down certain Buildings which at present greatly incommode the Public Market, and to make such other Alterations as may be found expedient for the Safety, Ease and convenient Accommodation of the Inhabitants and the Public in general.

And so the work of improvement went on. In time the oil lamp gave place to gas; but we must not forget the good begun by our forefathers in 1765 and completed in 1769. It is the earliest record of a great local contest, and it is encouraging to learn that liberal and disinterested intelligence won the victory. It was the happy augury of many such triumphs since obtained.

CHAPTER IV. 1771-1781.

§ I. APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

Local writers frequently allude to the wonderful and rapid growth of the town at this period; and doubtless to those who were living witnesses of the new streets made and the new houses built, it must have been remarkable. This growth filled some of the observers with hope and some with fear, according as the conservative or the progressive temperament prevailed. To us, however, who see what the town now is, and who endeavour, from the old views, directories, and advertisements, to picture to ourselves "Old Brum," its growth seems extraordinarily slow. Year after year we have it making some inroad into the country—absorbing some small space of field or garden land, breaking up some orchard, widening this narrow street, or taking down this obstruction—to us tracing this work step by step, and watching the process, as it were, by which it was done, the growth of Birmingham for the first half of the hundred years with which we are concerned appears to be that of a strong, sturdy, but not remarkably nimble creature. It will be seen that the main characteristics of our first decade are still with us in the fourth. The advertisements which we have selected are similar to those previously quoted; and of the greater part of Birmingham it might still be truly said that it was *rus in urbe*. In August 1772 this advertisement appeared:—

To be Let immediately or at Michaelmas next, a general House, No. 24, very pleasantly situated in Colmore-Row, opposite the New Church Yard, Birmingham, consisting of two large Parlours, four large Chambers, two Garrets with Closets in every Room, two large under Kitchens and Pantry, two large Cellars, an entire Back Yard and Garden. For further Particulars enquire of the Printers hereof.

In September of the same year such a house as this was to be found in Moor Street:—

To be Let and entered upon at Michaelmas next, a large commodious Dwelling House, No. 20, in Moor-Street, Birmingham, with two Malt-Houses, an entire Yard, Garden, Stable, &c., late in the Occupation of John Freeth, deceased. For Particulars enquire of S. Baker, near the Old Cross.

An advertisement of garden robberies which had recently been committed brings before us very vividly the different aspect the town then presented compared with that of the present time.

October 5th, 1772.—A Robbery.—Notice to all Day-Gardeners, and their Labourers. Whereas a Garden on the Eminence beyond New Hall, by the Road Side, leading to War-Stone Lane, has several Times been Robbed, and particularly on Thursday Night or Friday Morning last, of Sundry Shrubs.

The next extract contains two pleasing facts. We learn from it how genially mild the winter was in 1772, and what a pleasant part of the town Deritend was at this time. Such paragraphs as these enable us to appreciate Leland's truthfulness when he called it "as pretty a street or ever I entered."

December 14, 1772.—As an ocular Demonstration of the Lenity of the Season, there is now growing in a Parson's Garden in Deritend, several Carnations in Blossom, little inferior in Bloom and Perfection to those in July.

The next extract shows the kind of houses which were being built in New Hall Street :—

February 14, 1774.—Birmingham.—To be Let, and entered on at Lady-Day next, a modern-built Dwelling-House, with four Rooms on each Floor, and a very good Warehouse to the Front, with two Accompting Houses, a good three-stall Stable, an entire Yard, and a large Garden, with a Brewhouse, back Kitchen, and other Conveniences, situate at No. 3, in New Hall Street.—Enquire of Mrs. Bayley on the Premises, or Mr. Richard Rabone, next House.

It is quite refreshing to read such a paragraph as this :—

May 30, 1774.—We are informed that such a valuable Collection of choice Tulips hath not been seen in these Parts, as is now in great Perfection at Mr. Butcher's (late Cox's) Garden, in Deritend, adjoining to this Town, which are to be sold together or separate.

According to the following paragraph the trees sometimes bore unexpected fruit. There is a tragedy and romance in these few lines for any one of an active imagination.

Dec. 18th, 1775.—On Monday last a Woman was found hanging on an Apple Tree, in a Garden at Snow-Hill in this Town.—She had dressed herself in her best Cloaths, and when discover'd was suspended only by her Chin, the Cord not having gone round her Neck.—A Disappointment in a Love-Affair, is said to have been the cause of this rash Action.

The Park Street of 1776 was a pleasant place to live in. What the Park Street of 1867 is every one knows. Here we get a glimpse of its early state :—

September 16, 1776.—To be Let and entered upon immediately, a convenient House, belonging to the new-erected School in Park Street, Birmingham ; consisting of a Parlour, Kitchen, Pantry, and Back Kitchen, a very good dry Vault, and Four Lodging Rooms, with exceeding Good Water and Lead Pump : *before the Front of the House is a commodious Garden, with Chinese Palisades, the Whole entire.*—For further Information enquire at the School, or at Mr. Rann's, No. 50, Park-Street.

December 22nd, 1777.—This Morning, punctually at Twelve o'Clock, will be Sold by Auction, a very large Kitchen Garden, *being the furthestmost except Two in the Walk at Pudding Brook ;* is most richly manured and well planted with Vegetables, &c., of almost every kind, has a boarded Alcove, a large Two-light sashed Cucumber Frame, besides other Conveniences, Tools, &c.—Also the Lease (eight years of which are unexpired), *of a very large well-fenced Pleasure Garden, with a genteel sashed Alcove, built on an Eminence, with stored Stews, Fruit Trees, flowering Shrubs, Evergreens, Flower Roots, Garden Posts,* and other Conveniences, agreeably situated near the Road leading from Edgbaston Street to Lady Well, and some Time ago in the Occupation of Mr. Richard Goolden.

In 1778 was published an edition of “England's Gazetteer ; or an account descriptive of all the Cities, Towns, and Villages in England and Wales.” In this book the following brief but interesting account of Birmingham is given :—

“BIRMINGHAM, or BROMICHAM, *Warw.*, 88 c.m. and 109 miles from London, and 17 miles from Coventry. It is pleasantly situated on the side of a hill, forming nearly a half moon. It is about two miles in length (including the hamlet of Deritend and Bordesley), nearly the same in breadth, and about six miles in circumference ; contains 50,000 inhabitants, most of whom are employed in the manufacturing of gold, silver, steel, &c., in various forms for use as well as ornament, which have by their exquisite workmanship excited the attention of the curious, and for cheapness they cannot be surpassed or perhaps equalled in any part of the universe. Such a spirit of industry reigns there in all ranks of people, that even the women and children earn their living by fabricating of toys, trinkets, &c. Here are near 8,000 houses, besides workshops, warehouses, &c. Here are two churches, viz. : St. Martin's, an ancient building with a lofty spire and twelve good bells ; St. Philip's, a grand modern structure with a fine tower, ten bells, and a cupola above it, and stands in one of the finest church yards in Europe. In each of the steeples is a set of musical chimes, which play every three hours, and a different tune every day in the week. Here is a handsome chapel of ease, and an act of parliament has lately passed for building two more. Here are also two meeting

houses for presbyterians, one for quakers, and three for other dissenters. Here are three free schools, one of which, a noble structure, was founded by King Edward VI. for the grammatical education of 130 boys. The two other schools are supported by the contributions of the inhabitants; in one are 50 boys and 30 girls, who are educated and maintained till they are fourteen years old, when they are put out to different employs; the other school, which is a late institution, is supported by a voluntary subscription among the protestant dissenters, in which 27 children are maintained and educated, and apprenticed out at proper ages. Markets on Thursday. Fairs on Thursday in Whitsun week, and on September 29. It has no corporation, it being governed only by two constables, two bailiffs, and a headborough, it is therefore free for any person to come and settle here, which perhaps not a little contributes to the increase of its trade, buildings, and inhabitants. A navigable canal was begun in April, 1768, and completed in November, 1769, to the collieries at Wednesbury, from whence the inhabitants here are supplied with coals at a moderate price, which before sold at an exorbitant rate. In 1772 this canal was extended to Austherly, from whence a communication is opened through the Severn to Shrewsbury, Gloucester, &c., and through the Trent to Gainsborough and Hull, and it is also extended to Liverpool, &c., through the Mersey. Besides the manufactories carried on here, there are several established in the adjacent villages, of which that at the Soho merits attention. This place is situated in the parish of Handsworth, two miles from hence. The building consists of four quadrangles, with shops, warehouses, &c., for 1,000 workmen in the several branches of fabrication of buttons, buckles, &c., in which no care or expense is spared. Their ornamental pieces in Or-Moulu are highly esteemed all over Europe. The site of this building, which, about eight years since, was a barren uncultivated heath, now contains many houses, and wears the appearance of a populous town."

It is worth seeing what this "antient chronicle" records of the various places now immediately contiguous to this town. Of aristocratic Edgbaston we have this laconic entry: "*Edgbaston, Warw.*, on the Rhca, near Birmingham." Of another: "*Aston, Staff.*, near Birmingham." "*Handsworth, Staff.*, w. of Tame, near Warwickshire."

Another neighbouring village is thus honoured: *Harborne, Staff.*, on the s.w. side of Birmingham, has a charity-school. One James Sands, of this parish, who died in 1625, lived to the age of 140, and his wife to 120. He out-lived five leases of 21 years each, which were all made to him after he married." Of a place which is now a part of the borough, the *Gazetteer* thus speaks: "*Dudston, Warw.*, near Birmingham, in the road from Staffordshire, is an ancient village that takes its name from Dodo, or Dud, its original lord."

Besides this description of the Town given in the general *Gazetteer* of 1778, we have a local one of 1780, in a little volume called:—

"The Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Bilston, and Willenhall Directory; or Merchant's and Tradesman's Useful Companion, &c., &c. Printed and Sold by Pearson and Rollason." Among the contents of the volume are an "Historical Account of Birmingham from the earliest Date and most authentic Records;" an "Estimate of the number of Inhabitants, from a late correct Survey;" an "Alphabetical List of the principal Inhabitants, their respective Trades, and Places of Abode; with a List of the "Several Stage Waggons, Carriers, &c., that go from Birmingham to various parts of this Kingdom, the days on which they set out, the Places to which they go, and the Days on which they return." Thirty-five pages are employed in narrating the history of the family of the Birminghams, chiefly compil'd from Dugdale. Then follows an account of the "Hospital of St. Thomas the Apostle," of the "Gild of the Holy Cross," "of Clodshall's Chantry;" and then we have some particulars of the population and the trades of the town. "The number of Inhabitants, from an accurate survey taken in 1779, is estimated at 55,750, and the houses at 8,500, including Deritend, allowing in the proportion of six and a half to each house, which on this survey they were found to bear." In 1773, the population was estimated at 30,804, when London had 651,580, Liverpool 34,407, Manchester 24,533, Norwich, 24,580, and Leeds 16,380, according to "Enfield's History of Liverpool." The List of the several Manufacturers, Trades, &c., carried on in Birmingham, in the body of the book where the addresses are given, shows awl-blade makers, 6; button makers, 104; brassfounders, 23; brushmakers, 11; buckle-makers, 26; cutlers, 8; chape-makers, 9; candlestick-makers, 12; die-sinkers and engravers, 29; file-makers, 15; gun-makers, 21; glass pinchers, 11; hinge-makers, 9; japanners, 15; jewellers, 26; ironfounders, 8; lock-smiths, 14; merchants and factors, 66; platers, 46; ring-makers, 9; shoe-makers, 51; saw and edge-tool makers, 12; smiths, 21; tailors and stay-makers, 44; toy-makers, 40; turners, 10; and watch-chain makers, 17; besides many other trades not included in this classified list. The writer next proceeds to describe some of the "multiplicity of manufactures," and apologises for "the difficulty of obtaining proper information." The trades described are "buttons, papier-mache, toys, cast-founders, coffin and ornamental furniture, gun-making, whip-making, and weighing-machines," and some of the details may be worth quoting hereafter. The account of "gun-making" will be most probably interesting, especially as it shows that while revolvers were attempted nearly eighty years ago, great rapidity of firing was supposed to be attained by the Magazine gun, which could be fired ten times in two minutes.*

* Este, in "Notes and Queries" in *Aris's Gazette*, 1850.

This has a pleasant sound about it. Glebe lands and Meadows near the Moat! Meadows and moat have both vanished now, whatever may have become of the glebe lands.

February 26, 1781.—To be LET and entered upon at Lady-Day next, Three MEADOWS, being the Glebe Land belonging to St. Philip's Church, in Birmingham, adjoining the Road which leadeth from the Moat to Long-Bridge, and containing eight Acres and a half and upwards.

Enquire of Mr. Jackson, Clerk of St. Philips.

Young men still remember the Gardens mentioned in this advertisement, but where are they now?

March 12, 1781.—Also to be Sold, a Garden, among Nova-Scotia Gardens, well-planted, and with a good Brick Summer-House in it.

The change in the names of places is very strange. We have already noticed several such changes. For instance, Moor Street was Mole Street; Ann Street was Mount Pleasant, and then the Haymarket; Monmouth Street was Bull Lane; Steelhouse Lane, White Hall; Colmore Row, New Hall Lane; the Lozells, the Lowcells, and then the Laurells; Balsall Heath, Boswell Heath; and so on. The next advertisement gives us a description of the well-known Orange Tree Inn:—

March 19th, 1781.—To be Let and entered upon at Lady-Day next, or sooner if required, A new-erected House, sashed Ffront, known by the Name of the Orange Tree, with a Garden containing about Two Acres of Land, well planted with excellent Fruit Trees, with or without about Ten Acres of Land adjoining; situated at Boswell-Heath, about One Mile from Birmingham. Also a House situated near Moseley, with a pleasant Garden well planted with Fruit Trees and Shrubs, a Fish Pond at the Bottom of the Garden, and other two nearly adjoining. Enquire of Mr. Avery Edwards, Tanner, on Boswell Heath, who will shew the Premises and treat on further Particulars; of Mr. Francis Mold, at the Spread Eagle, in Spiceal-Street; or of Mr. Clement Cottrill, at King's-Heath, near Moseley.

Here is another Advertisement concerning this house.

To be LET, GENTEEL LODGINGS, at a late erected House, formerly known by the name of the Orange Tree, on the Top of Boswell Heath, about a Mile distant from Birmingham: Two front Parlours and two Front Chambers, together or separate, with the Use of a Kitchen for Cooking, and a Brewhouse for Brewing, Washing, &c.—Enquire of Mr. Avery Edwards, Tanner, on Boswell-Heath aforesaid.

November in 1781 was remarkable for its mildness, of which the following is a proof:—

November 26, 1781.—As a Proof of the mildness of the Season, there are now many Apple Trees in full Blossom at Bidford in this County; and *Cowslips, full blown, were gathered last Week in a Garden in this Town.*

The next extract might as appropriately be placed in the section on public events. It is a most important bit of information, but as it shows the extent to which the town was expanding, and therefore changing its appearance, it naturally belongs to this place. It is the first attempt to establish a building society on a large scale, and the reader will no doubt be astonished at the greatness of its proposed operations: to continue no fewer than seven streets, and to open two new ones, is, as friend Launcelot says "a simple coming in for one" society. Here is the record of what it was proposed to do, and how it was proposed to do it:—

December 3, 1781.—PROPOSALS, for establishing a SOCIETY for BUILDING on Lands belonging to William Jennings, Esq., to continue certain Streets in the Hamlet of DERITEND, called BRADFORD-STREET, ALCESTER-STREET, LOMBARD-STREET, MOSELEY-STREET, BIRCHALL-STREET, and CHEAPSIDE; and open certain new Streets, to be called RIVER-STREET and LONG BRIDGE-STREET.

I. That the Subscribers shall, on the Evening of the first Monday in every month, meet at the FOUNTAIN, in CHEAPSIDE, and pay into the Hands of a Treasurer, (to be appointed by the Society) Half a Guinea on every Share, for the Purpose of raising a Fund for carrying this Scheme into Execution.

II. That a Committee of Seven Proprietors shall be appointed annually by the Subscribers, under whose direction the Business of the Society shall be carried into Execution.

III. That each Subscriber for three Shares, shall have one or more Houses built, of the Value of Two Hundred Guineas; and each Subscriber for two Shares, shall have one or more houses, Value One Hundred and Forty Pounds; and each Subscriber for one Share, shall have a single House, Value Seventy Pounds.

IV. That the Rents and Profits of the said intended Buildings be paid into the hands of the Treasurer, and added to the general Fund or Stock.

V. That the Committee shall have power to contract for the Leasing of the Lands intended to be built upon, in such Proportions as they shall think proper, and for such Terms, not less than 110 years, and subject to a ground Rent not exceeding Three half-pence per square yard.

VI. That the Majority of the Subscribers shall have power to make Bye-Laws and Regulations, together with necessary Articles, Rules, and Orders, to be performed and executed by the Members of the said intended Society.

VII. That the Land intended for Building upon, shall be laid out in Lots, and Balloted for by the Subscribers, and separate Leases made and executed; but such Leases to remain in the Hands of the Committee till the proposed Buildings are completed.

VIII. The first Payment of Ten Shillings and Sixpence on each Share, to be made THIS DAY, the 3rd of December, 1781, when Particulars at large of the peculiar advantages of this Scheme will be laid before the Meeting.

The local Muse was invoked to sing the praises of at least one of the pleasant abodes of the time. Not to interrupt the proper succession of

the advertisements of houses during this period, the following *bonne bouche*, although printed on May 8, 1780, has been kept to conclude this section.

Ode, on the finishing of a Gentleman's Pleasure Ground, in the vicinity of Birmingham.

Ye bow'rs where nature sports in artless wiles,
 And fancy frolics with bewitching smiles ;
 Whose pow'rs like those of fairest beauty charms,
 And care of its heart-piercing sting disarms ;
 Such only can the eye of taste approve,
 Such only peace and contemplation love.

Hence, mimic, art !—thy stately scenes
 Around the Corinth-column'd dome display ;
 These best become where grandeur lords its sway,
 And pride in all her trappings reigns,
 Insulted nature scorns the specious show,
 And wings her flight where humbler flow'rets blow.

Hail, sacred nymph ! thy charms be here display'd,
 Oppos'd to them, art's gaudiest laurels fade ;
 From thy gay lap be all that's pleasing thrown,
 Grace, ease, simplicity are all thy own :
 So shall each scene Hesperian beauties wear,
 Shall all that ancient bards have sung, declare.

And lo, with modest cheek and roseate bloom,
 She comes !—her smiles these infant dells illumine ;
 Now wandering o'er the tufted green,
 Now musing in the grove is seen,
 Sports round the lake or down the shrub-fringed glade,
 And points delighted to her own cascade.

See from their lucid beds the Naiads gaze,
 The Driads from the oaklings spring,
 While old Silvanus tunes his rustic lays,
 And sport the fairies in a ring.

And you, ye guardian deities of hills,
 Of woods, and lawns, clear streams, and gushing rills,
 Shield, O shield from harm these peaceful bow'rs,
 The stream protect, the trees, and budding flow'rs ;
 Bid the curv'd lake in waving silver flow,
 The shrubs to blossom and the trees to grow ;
 From the rude rock, where nature taught its way,
 In ceaseless murmurs bid the water play ;
 The grove affords a grateful cooling shade,
 And birds in tuneful warblings fill the glade.

So shall taste's fairest blossoms rise,
 Where once unhallow'd brambles grew ;

Shall each exploring eye surprise,
 And point Elysium to the view.
 And hark, methinks I hear
 Enchanting music near ;
 Sweetly it breathes its notes around,
 Still soft—and softer still its sound :
 Harmonious chords—now it fills the air,
 In sounds propitious to the muse's prayer.
 Ah, little dream the sons of pomp and state,
 Who, proud, distain the life that is not great,
 What halcyon joys a calm retirement gives,
 Where peace sits smiling, and where concord lives.
 'Tis ye who know to taste the social hour,
 Who spurn ambition, and who count not pow'r ;
 Whose hearts with sympathetic friendship glow ;
 Who, willing, stretch the hand to hapless woe ;
 Who most deserve, yet blush at just applause ;
 Who fond of nature, follow nature's laws :—
 'Tis ye alone are form'd for rural joys,
 To taste that bliss supreme that never cloy.—
 Nor shall the muse be mute when truths are clear,
 That bliss, reward of virtue, worth, reigns here.

§ 2. PUBLIC LIFE AND EVENTS.

In the history of towns, as in that of nations, a period of activity is often followed by one of comparative quiet, if not of actual apathy. This, however, does not appear to be the case with Birmingham. Having once begun to move, her course indicated the motto which she has since appropriately adopted, and was always "Forward." That progress was slow, but invariably onward. Year by year new undertakings were begun, fresh evidences of public spirit manifested, and an increased persistence in the attainment of their desires displayed by her people. The energy of the town was not exhausted by the great public labours which distinguished the ten years from 1761 to 1771. In the decade, the public life of which we are about to record, the same remarkable progress and activity are found. In these ten years the Assay Office was established, two new churches were built, the Volunteer movement begun, and a very large number of important subjects discussed ; perpetual proofs afforded of the healthy vitality of

the inhabitants. Above all the labours which mark these ten years, however, that of founding the Birmingham Library pre-eminently appears as the wisest, noblest, and most productive of good. The first public event which we have to notice is one of benevolence; a good augury for the commencement of this decade. The two extracts appear on the same day.

January 20th, 1772.—Yesterday an excellent Sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Male, in the Morning at St. Martin's and in the Afternoon at St. Philip's Church; after which a Collection was made for poor Housekeepers, which amounted at both Churches to 56*l*.

January 20, 1772.—The Inhabitants of this Town are desired to send to the Church-Wardens, before Friday next, Letters to recommend such poor House-keepers that receive no Relief from the Parish, describing their Situation, Number of Family, and Street they live in, and are proper Objects to receive the Money collected Yesterday in the Churches.—The Church-Wardens desire the Inhabitants will meet them at Mr. Adcock's, at the Saracen's-Head in Bull Street, on Friday next, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, to determine what Proportion each Object shall receive.—Note, Any further Benefactions for the above laudable Purpose, will be thankfully received by the Church-Wardens.

Our next is of a Post-Office grievance :—

April 6th, 1772.—AN ALARM.—The Inhabitants of this Town have for a long Time had a very heavy Imposition laid upon them by the Post Mistress, in making them pay one Half-penny for the Delivery of every Letter at their Houses, and which has been taken off in every Town where the Inhabitants have had Spirit enough to withstand such Imposition.—No place can have better Pretensions to have it taken off than this Town, where a great Number of Letters must come to Persons that are in real want of Money to purchase the Necessaries of Life, and to whom the smallest Sum is of the greatest Consequence; an Opportunity now offers for you to exert yourselves, and get relieved from this Burthen, without any possible Complaint of Hardship or Injury from the Post Master. Mrs. Gunn has very lately petitioned the Post Masters General to resign her Office, and another Person was on Wednesday last appointed to succeed her; and altho' Mrs. Gunn will continue to conduct the Business until Midsummer next, yet she is no longer to be considered as Post Mistress.—Some Persons might have objected to take the Half-penny from the Widow whilst she enjoyed the Advantages of the Office; yet as another Person is appointed, the present is the most proper Time for you to do yourselves Justice, and get relieved from this Imposition.—It is therefore submitted to your Consideration, if a Meeting should not be appointed, to draw up a Petition to the Post Masters General, praying that Orders may be given the new Post Master, that he shall not take the extra Half-penny for the Delivery of Letters any longer, but only the Postage established by Act of Parliament, which Petition there is no Doubt but either of your Representatives in Parliament will deliver to them, and obtain their Answer.—If you cannot get relieved by this Method, then to enter into a Subscription to bring an Action against the Post Master, if he continues to take such Half-penny, and there is not the least room to doubt but a Verdict will be obtained in your Favour; for the Case was

very lately argued before the Judges in his Majesty's Court of King's Bench, upon a special Verdict from the City of Gloucester, when the Courts were unanimous in their Opinion, "That the taking the extra Half-penny for the Delivery of Letters was an Imposition not warranted by Law," and they established the Verdict for the Plaintiff, with Costs of Suit.

Some distinguished personages pay us a visit this year :—

September 28th, 1772.—Last Week their Excellencies the French and Danish Ambassadors, with their Ladies, together with Lord Valentia and his Lady, Governor Lyttelton, Lord and Lady Shrewsbury, the Count of Calenberg, and the Marquis de Porzay, arrived in this Town, when they visited the Soho and several other Manufactories here, and afterwards proceeded on their respective Journeys.

The thieves of those times gave the people infinite trouble. The police system was so imperfect, the state of the streets and roads so favourable to the "snappers up of unconsidered trifles," or the knockers down of stray travellers; the laws were of such a dreadfully Draconic nature that they only increased the boldness and recklessness of the plundering fraternity, and the repugnance to prosecute which they produced in the more humane added to the impunity with which robberies were committed. Associations for the prosecution of felons were established all over the country. Such an association was thus initiated in Birmingham :—

November 2nd, 1772.—To the Inhabitants of the Parish of Birmingham.—An Instrument will be left at S. Aris's, the Printer of this Paper, on Monday the 9th of November Inst., for all Persons to subscribe who are desirous of entering into an Association and Subscription for detecting, pursuing and prosecuting all Persons concerned in any Felony, Petty-Larceny, or wantonly destroying any Part of the Property of the Subscribers.

Birmingham was alarmed at this time by the shock of an earthquake.

November 16th, 1772.—Yesterday morning about Four o'Clock, a Shock of an Earthquake was sensibly felt in this Town and the Neighbourhood; at Yardley a Farmer observed his House to shake very much, and heard a Flock of Sheep in an adjacent Field running about in great confusion, occasioned by the Agitation of the Earth and the Noise which attended it. From various other parts we have a Confirmation of the above Shock.

The want of church accommodation was very much felt then, as now, and a Church Extension Society was formed to supply the deficiency. On March 2, 1772, this statement and plan were laid before the inhabitants :—

The great Want of Public Places of Divine Worship in this Town, have induced Numbers of the Inhabitants to take into Consideration the Expediency of building one or more additional Churches, several public Meetings have been held for that Purpose; when it has been unanimously resolved that at least two additional Churches were wanted

for the Accommodation of the Inhabitants, the present not being capable of containing One Tenth Part of those professing the Doctrine of the Church of England : To take off so great a Reproach from Civil Society, and remove even the Appearance of Contempt for Holy Religion, it was determined, if possible, to obtain so pious and valuable an acquisition, and to that End Application was made to the Several Proprietors of Land contiguous to the Town, requesting Land for so good a Purpose, without Regard to Partiality of Situation, two of whom (*viz.*), Miss Weaman, and Charles Colemore, Esq., not only consented to give the necessary Land, but Subscribed liberally towards perfecting the Business.

Success having attended the Matter thus far, Subscriptions were set on Foot for Monies to apply to Parliament, and a Petition agreeably thereto has been presented for Leave to bring in a Bill for building two Churches, one of which is intended to be built near to Catherine-Street,* and the other near to New-Hall.

The following Plan for which has been adopted :—

1st.—That separate Subscriptions be opened to raise Money for building the Churches, with Houses for the Residence of the officiating Clergymen ; such Subscriptions to be paid by Four equal Instalments, giving six Months' public Notice of the Days of Payment.

2dly.—That the Gentlemen in the Neighbourhood and every Subscriber of Twenty Pounds be appointed Trustees for the Conduct and Direction of the Business.

3dly.—That the Salary to each Officiating Clergyman be fixed by Parliament, at not more than Two Hundred Pounds, nor less than One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, per Annum, to arise from the Kneelings.

4thly.—That the rents of the Kneelings between the two extremes be fixed by the Trustees.

5thly.—That the Surplice Fees be fixed by Parliament.

6thly.—That no Diminution be made in the Fees of the Incumbents of Saint Philip's and Saint Martin's ; on the contrary, that they receive their full Fees for all Offices performed at the new Intended Churches.

7thly.—That certain Districts be marked out for the Officiating Clergymen, to have the Cure of Souls, visit the Sick, and do the necessary Duties ; but that such Districts be not deemed separate Parishes, or be subject to separate Assessments, but the Buildings to be kept in Repair by the General Levy of the Town.

8thly.—That two Wardens be appointed to each of the Churches, who shall take a proportionable Part of the Town in collecting the Levy.

9thly.—That the Pews and Kneelings be disposed of to the Subscribers by Ballot, according to their respective Subscriptions, with such other Clauses and Regulations as are usual, or as Parliament may think proper to adopt.

The Persons who have hitherto prompted this Business will, in a few Days, begin to collect Subscriptions, but thought it necessary, previously thereto, to advertise the Inhabitants of their Intentions, at the same Time to disavow every Degree of Partiality in the Choice of the Spots of Land identified, and to assure the Inhabitants that they have been actuated only by Dispositions to render the Objects in View as extensively useful as might be.

* Now Whitall Street. Within the memory of the writer that part of it from St. Mary's Row to Bath Street was called Catherine Street.

Separate Deeds of Subscriptions will be handed about, so that every Individual will make which Church he pleases the Object, no Persuasions being intended to be used ; but they hope, and have no Doubt that the Necessity of the Case will plead for itself, and that every Individual will cheerfully contribute his Quota, influenced only by a Desire to promote so pious and necessary a Work.

On the 9th of the same month we learn that the response to this appeal was a liberal and encouraging one.

On the 30th we learn that " Last Tuesday a Bill was ordered to be brought into Parliament for one or more Churches in this Town." An Act was obtained for building two chapels, St. Mary's and St. Paul's. The history of these sacred edifices runs through the present decade, but it will be more convenient to give it in a consecutive order, which we proceed to do. On May 18, we read that even this project had its opponents, and also the curious reason given for withdrawing the opposition.

On Friday last the Committee of the House of Commons went through the Bill for the Building of two Churches in this Town. Mr. Tenant has given up the opposition upon Consideration of the Town's not opposing a Bill which he intends petitioning Parliament for next Sessions, in order to make St. Bartholomew's Chapel a Parish Church, which the present Solicitors have answered for in the affirmative. The Bill comes before the House this Day, and on Wednesday will be carried to the Lords.

On May 22 the Bill was read a second time in the House of Lords, through which it passed in the same month and received the royal assent. A meeting was held on July 29, and the following advertisement informs us what was done thereat, and also gives reason for calling the first of the two Chapels St. Mary's.

BIRMINGHAM NEW-INTENDED CHAPELS.

Birmingham, August 2nd, 1772.—In Pursuance of the Act of Parliament lately obtained, for building two New Chapels in the said Town, and of an Order of the Trustees qualified under and by virtue of the same Act, made at a Meeting held the 29th day of July last, All and every Person and Persons who hath or have subscribed any Sum or Sums of Money towards erecting, finishing, and completing one of the said Chapels, *upon the land of Mary Weaman*, and in the said Act distinguished by the Name of the Chapel of St. Mary, are required to pay into the Hands of Mr. John Cottrell, of Walmer Lane, in Birmingham aforesaid, the Collector appointed by the said Trustees, on or before the second day of February next, after the Rate of 25*l.* per cent. in Respect of all and every their several Subscriptions. By Order of the said Trustees.

JOHN MEREDITH, Clerk.

N.B. As great Numbers of Persons who have not yet subscribed to this laudable Undertaking, promised that they would subscribe as soon as the Act was obtained ; the Trustees again take the Liberty to request their Assistance, to which End Subscription Books will be left open at S. Aris's, Printer, at Mr. Meredith's, Attorney, in Birmingham

aforesaid; and it is hoped that the Subscriptions will be so liberal as to enable the Trustees to set about and accomplish both the said Chapels with Expedition.

On November 9, 1772, architects and builders "capable of such an undertaking" are requested to apply to Mr. Cottrell's, at No. 18, Walmer Lane, for particulars to form a plan, section, and estimate for building one of such chapels. On December 7 a fuller advertisement was published, which gives us a brief description of the form and size of the new chapel.

Whereas by an Act of Parliament, passed the last Sessions, for building two new Chapels in the Town of Birmingham, we do hereby request any Architect or Builder capable of such an Undertaking, to send or deliver in Plans, Elevations, and Estimates, sealed up, to Mr. John Cottrell, at No. 18, Walmer-Lane, Birmingham, on or before the 22nd day of January next, for building one of the said Chapels, as no Plans, &c., will be received after that Day.—The said Chapel to be built in an Octagon or any other Form as the said Architects shall think proper, and to contain 1,000 Sitings. The Breadth of the Seats to be two Feet eleven Inches, the Middle Isle eight Feet, and the outside Isles to be four Feet wide. And for further Particulars apply to the said John Cottrell.

In September Musical Entertainments were given in aid of the Funds for completing St. Mary's Chapel. On the 5th of that month we learn that "Great Preparations are making against the Celebrity which begins here on Wednesday next, at which a numerous and brilliant Company is expected, Apartments being already engaged for many Families of Rank and Distinction."

The result of this benefit is told in the next quotation :—

Birmingham, September 12, [1774].—On Wednesday last the Musical Entertainments began here, when Handel's Grand Dettingen Te Deum, Jubilate, and Coronation Anthem, were performed in St. Philip's Church to a crowded and respectable Audience, and in the Evening at the New Theatre, Alexander's Feast was exhibited with great Applause.—On Thursday Morning, at St. Philip's Church, the Oratorio of Judas Maccabæus; and in the Evening, at the Theatre, a Grand Miscellaneous Concert was performed to a very brilliant and numerous Company, which reiterated Plaudits, in which the Vocal Performers, particularly Miss Davis and Mrs. Wrighten discovered very capital Powers; and the Instrumental Performance in general gave the highest Satisfaction.—And on Friday Morning the Sacred Oratorio of Messiah was performed at the Church.—The Produce of the different Entertainments is supposed to amount to about 800*l*., which sum is to be applied towards the Completion of St. Mary's Chapel. The Balls on Wednesday and Thursday Evenings were uncommonly splendid, and were honoured with the Presence of many Persons of the first Rank and Distinction in this Kingdom.

St. Mary's having been built and consecrated, the friends of Church Extension paused for a little over a year and then resumed their labours. On March 18, 1776, we have the first announcement in reference to St. Paul's :—

Birmingham, March 14, 1776.—RELIGION.—At a Meeting held this Day, of the Trustees, appointed by Act of Parliament, for Building two Chapels in this Town, it was resolved to begin ST. PAUL'S, as soon as a sufficient Sum shall be subscribed for that Purpose; and they intend waiting on the Public to solicit their generous Contributions for so necessary an undertaking.

GEORGE HOLLOWAY.

N.B. Subscription Books are also left with Pearson and Rollason, Printers of this Paper.

In this year an accident occurred at St. Mary's Chapel, which happily was not attended with any serious result.

October 7, 1776.—During the time of Divine Service in the above Place (St. Mary's Chapel) Yesterday Morning, the Congregation, which was uncommonly numerous, was thrown into the utmost Consternation and Distress imaginable, occasioned by a Part of the Gallery giving Way. Though the Confusion and Fear of the Company were great and general, we are happy to find no other Injury was sustained than that of some Gentlemen's losing their Hats and several Ladies their Handkerchiefs, &c.

On May 29, 1777, the first stone of St. Paul's was laid, of which we have the following brief account :—

June 2nd, 1777.—On Thursday last, the first Stone of St. Paul's Chapel was laid by one of the Trustees, and under the stone was placed a Medal, with an Inscription in Commemoration thereof.—As it is intended to execute the Building not only with as much Expedition as possible, but with that Permanency and Taste which may do credit to the Town, it is therefore hoped that every necessary Encouragement will be given to the Undertaking.

On December 8, 1777, we read :—

It is with Pleasure we can assure our Readers, that the Chapel of St. Paul, in this Town, will be ready for Consecration by the 1st of March, 1779. It will be a neat substantial Building, and is calculated to contain about One Thousand Sitings.

As in the case of St. Mary's Chapel, subscriptions to St. Paul's were paid in four instalments of twenty-five per cent. each.

The next extract shows that the trustees proceeded in a very business-like way to obtain a clergyman for their new chapel.

ADVOWSON.

Birmingham, July 10, 1778.—The Trustees appointed by Act of Parliament in Building St. Paul's Chapel in this Town, being desirous of fixing on a Clergyman to present to the Living (which will be worth upwards of two Hundred Pounds per Annum), give this Public Notice to such Gentlemen as may wish to treat for the same, that they may be furnished with further Particulars, by applying to Mr. Daniel Winwood, in Birmingham, any Time before the 14th Day of August next.

Our next extract relates to ecclesiastical matters also :—

March 15, 1773.—The Bill to enable the Rector of St. Martin's in this Town to grant Leases, now lies ready for Royal Assent.

The Birmingham people were always vigorous in resisting encroachments. Our next quotation is the record of a grievance, and a proof that the public were alive to their rights and their interests. The *Gazette* gives no information as to the result of this protest. We believe that it was not successful.

May 10, 1773.—Sir Thomas Gooch's Agents are taking from the Inhabitants of this Town, an old ancient Footway leading from Paradise-Row thro' the Fields to Edgbaston, without asking Leave; a Road of much more Consequence to the Town than that which cost so many Hundred Pounds to recover that leads by New-Hall: As they have no right to alter the Road, it is a Pity but the Town would prevent it in Time, by insisting upon their Rights, and to put a Stop to their further Proceedings. The Way they are turning the Public is many hundred Yards about, and in the Winter Time is not passable, and will not be perhaps these 7 Years.

The rogues who sold by short weights and measures were, as we have seen, punished in a summary manner by having their goods distributed to the poor. The action against them, however, was of an irregular and uncertain kind, and there was no fund by which to prosecute these most disgraceful of thieves. The evil was growing intolerable, and the public resolved to make an effort to stop it. The following notice gives us information on this subject. The concluding part of the paragraph is a curious instance of how things were done in those days :—

Birmingham, July 19, 1773.—Notice is hereby given, That at a Meeting held this Day at the Cross Chamber, it was resolved that the High Bailiff shall prosecute at the Town's Expence, all Persons who shall in future be found guilty of selling by short Weights or Measures. Public Notice prior to the above Meeting would have been given as usual at the several Dissenting Meeting Houses in this Town, as well as the Churches, had it not escaped the Memory of the Gentlemen who caused the same to be called; therefore it is hoped that the Omission will not be taken ill, as they did not mean to make any Exceptions.

Besides the *Gazette* we had a newspaper published on Thursdays called "The Birmingham Chronicle and Warwickshire Journal." Our Aris was one of the proprietors of this paper until 1773, when the partnership was dissolved, and the Chronicle became Mr. Swinney's. The announcement of the dissolution appeared on August 10 :—

Birmingham, August 9, 1773.—The Partnership between Messrs. Aris, Sketchley, Appleby, and Swinney, being mutually dissolved, Notice is hereby given, that the Thursday's Paper, intitled "The Birmingham Chronicle and Warwickshire Journal," lately published on their joint Account, will in future be published and circulated by Miles Swinney alone; to whom all Persons indebted to the said late Partnership Trade, are

required to pay their respective Debts, and all Persons having any Claims or Demands on the said Trade, are desired forthwith to deliver an Account thereof to the said Miles Swinney, who is to receive to his own Use all the Debts owing to the said Trade, and is to discharge all Debts owing therefrom.

The coinage gave great trouble at this time. Week after week we have complaints of light gold and silver coins, of bad halfpence, and bad money generally. In vain efforts were made to stop the evil. We shall have to treat this question more fully later in this section, and merely allude to it now to explain the following notice. Portugal money was in common circulation, and the value of this currency had also depreciated. On September 13, we read that

At a Meeting of the Tradesmen of this Town, held on Wednesday last, it was agreed to take Portugal Money as under :—

s.	d.		s.	d.
36	0	if it wants no more than	1	0
27	0	Pieces - - - - -	1	0
18	0	Ditto - - - - -	0	8
13	6	Ditto - - - - -	0	6
9	0	Ditto - - - - -	0	6
6	9	Ditto - - - - -	0	4
4	6	Ditto - - - - -	0	3

And Guineas as usual.

The following epigram which appeared on the same day explains itself :—

EPIGRAM.—*On issuing Five-and-Three-penny Notes from the Birmingham Bank.*

Light Gold is the Devil, good Silver is scarce,
And *Ports* were rejected to keep up the Farce,
But the Bank has relieved us in being replete,
With pieces the LIGHTEST yet quite the full Weight.

Government had taken up the difficult question of the currency, and an act was being prepared to regulate it. The extent to which the silver coin had depreciated is forcibly shown in the following extract :—

November 8, 1773.—A Correspondent having weighed twenty one Shillings, assures us, that at the present Price of Sterling Silver, they are worth no more than Seventeen Shillings and Four Pence ; so that the Holders of that Coin will suffer a Loss (when the expected Act for regulating the Currency of Silver takes Place) of at least Four Shillings in every Guinea's Worth.

The projects for increased canal navigation were numerous. The next two quotations relate to some of these.

Birmingham, January 10, 1774.—On Tuesday last, a Meeting was held at the Swan Inn, to consider of the Expediency of a Canal from this Town to join with the Coventry

and Oxford Canals, and a Plan and Estimate was produced for making such Canal to Coventry, which will be near fifty Miles in Length :—The Meeting was adjourned till Tuesday the 25th Instant ; and Messrs. Simcox and Whitworth are ordered to survey and make a Plan and Estimate for making a Canal from Birmingham to Fazeley, which is expected to be fifteen Miles nearer to the Oxford Cut, and 28 Miles nearer to Gainsborough than round by the Wolverhampton Canal.

Birmingham, January 31, 1774.—At a numerous Meeting of the Public, held at the Swan Inn, in this Town, on Tuesday the 25th Instant, by Adjournment from the 4th Inst., to take into Consideration as well a Plan produced at such former Meeting of a Line of Canal from the Birmingham Canal to join the Oxford Canal at or near Coventry, as also a Plan of a Line of Canal from this Town by Fazeley and Atherstone, to communicate with the Coventry Canal. The Propriety of entering into a Subscription for carrying into Execution either of such Plans, was fully and candidly discussed ; but it being then represented that it was practicable to effect a Communication between the Birmingham Canal and the Oxford, by a line from hence to or near Napton, and that such Line would be near forty miles shorter between this Place and Oxford than either of the other two Lines : It was resolved, that all further Proceedings upon the two Plans produced at such Meeting should be superseded, and that a Subscription should be opened for taking the most correct Survey and Plan possible of a Line of Canal from hence to or near Napton, which was accordingly done, and the Subscription Roll left in the Hands of Mr. Meredith, Attorney at Law, to whom all Persons who are desirous of promoting a Work of such extensive Utility are desired to apply.

The general election took place this year, and the contest in North Warwickshire was a close one. A correspondent "D." furnished to the Notes and Queries in the *Gazette*, 1856, the following Song, written in celebration of the victory of Sir Charles Holte :—

WARWICKSHIRE ELECTION SONG, 1774.—The election of 1774 was the most strongly contested one ever known in the County, the poll being kept open ten days. The candidates were Mr. Skipwith, the old member, Mr. Mordaunt, and Sir Charles Holte. The latter stood on the Independent interest, while Mr. Mordaunt had the support of the Court party. Both parties voted for Mr. Skipwith. Sir Charles won by 58 majority. The accompanying Song was written by an enthusiastic barber of Atherstone to celebrate the victory, and forwarded by him (as likely to prove an acceptable morceau) to the late Abraham Bracebridge, Esq., who was an ardent supporter of the Hon. Baronet's cause. For the first seven days the majority was in favour of Mordaunt, which will explain an allusion in the song. The electors of Birmingham and the neighbouring towns, almost to a man, voted for "Holte and Independence," but *Aris's Gazette* stood firmly by Mr. Mordaunt. The Song refers solely to Hemlingford Hundred, where Sir Charles's support almost entirely lay :—

The Hemlingford Hundred.

Hail, hearts of oak ! ye freeborn swains
Of noble Arden's fruitful plains,
By Drayton fam'd in ancient story,
For men of valour and of glory.

When tyrant lords together joined,
 In galling fetters them to bind,
 See how in gallant troops they ride,
 Resolved to stop the roaring tide.
 Each peasant tosses high his crest,
 With freedom writ upon his breast,
 Whilst Holte and Independence show
 Their gallant leaders in true blue.
 Brave sons of Vulcan lead the van,
 Alike the cause, alike the man,
 Which to support, in grand parade,
 They gently move en cavalcade.
 And Anker from her flowery banks,
 Sends out whole troops, in well-formed ranks,
 Of chaises, coach, and caravan ;
 And courteous* Bracebridge leads the van.
 Whose freeborn soul with scorn disdains
 To wear the tyrant's glittering chains ;
 Her sister Tame, from oozy bed,
 With courage rears her wat'ry head,—
 To quit her banks exhorts each swain,
 On boldly march in Freedom's train ;
 These hostile foes at Warwick meet,
 To try their fortune in the street.
 The noble lords, with great parade,
 At first a furious onset made,
 And twice and thrice a conquest sound,
 But still the freemen kept their ground.
 Whose courage roused, with sword in hand,
 They next attack the lordly band,
 Till they at length are forced to yield,
 And with reluctance quit the field.
 Their forces all are put to rout ;
 Ye Gods ! it was a glorious bout !
 May their example followed be,
 By those brave souls that will be free !

We have, fortunately, an account of the reception given in this town to the popular and victorious candidate :—

November 7th, 1774.—Sir Charles Holte on his public Entry into this Town on Wednesday last, received every Mark of Respect and Attention, which could be paid by a generous and free People to an independent Representative. The Entertainment provided for him at the Swan Inn, by the Freeholders, was elegant and well-conducted : and notwithstanding the amazing Concourse of Persons assembled on this joyful

* Mr. Bracebridge was at this time a suitor to Miss Holte.

Occasion, the public Peace was preserved in such a Manner as will reflect eternal Honour on the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

The troubles with America were beginning to tell on the trade of the town, and the manufacturers and merchants became alive to the probable result of that ill-starred war. Our next batch of extracts relates to American affairs. It will be seen that the Birmingham people were in favour of the Government not relaxing their rule over the colonies :—

January 16th, 1775.—At a large and respectable Meeting of the Merchants, Factors, and Manufacturers of this Town and Neighbourhood, interested in the Trade to North America, held at the Dolphin Inn, on Wednesday the 11th Instant, pursuant to an Advertisement in this Paper on Monday last, it was unanimously agreed that the present want of Orders from that Country is already very sensibly felt ; it was also agreed with very little Exception, that the present unhappy Obstruction of our Commerce with North America is of so alarming a Nature, as to render it expedient to apply immediately to Parliament thereupon ; in Consequence of which a Committee was appointed to draw up a Petition, which will be produced for the Approbation of another Meeting, to be held at the Dolphin Inn, To-morrow, the Seventeenth Instant, at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon, where it is requested that all Persons concerned therein will give their Attendance.

January 23rd, 1775.—Whereas an Assertion is made in an Advertisement published in Swinney's Chronicle last Thursday, "That the Americans have urged their Friends with "whom they are connected in Business, to embarrass, as much as possible, the Measures "of Government, by presenting Petitions from the several manufacturing Towns of the "Kingdom, exaggerating the distressed State of their Trade, and their Apprehensions of "its growing worse:" We, whose Names are under-written, being immediately and principally concerned in the Exportation of Goods from hence to North America, do hereby declare, That we have not directly or indirectly received one Solicitation from any of our American Correspondence to the above-mentioned purpose.

Joseph Smith	John Richards	Sampson Freeth
W. Welch	George Russell	John Twigg
Jos. Wilkinson	Samuel Harvey, Jun.	J. P. Marindin
John Richards	John Startin	John Turton

January 23rd, 1775.—A Petition to the House of Commons from this Town, setting forth that the Petitioners are apprehensive any Relaxation in the Laws respecting the Colonies of Great Britain will ultimately tend to the Detriment of the Commerce of this Town, and Neighbourhood ; therefore pray that Honourable House to continue to exert their Endeavours to support the Laws of this Kingdom, over all the Dominions belonging to the Crown, has been handed about this Town, has met with great Approbation, and is signed by many of the Principal Merchants and Manufacturers.

On the same day was published the announcement of the death of one of the most remarkable of Birmingham men. On the 8th of January, 1775, died "at Easy Hill, in this town, Mr. John Baskerville, whose memory will be perpetuated by the Beauty and Elegance of his

Printing, which he carried to very great Perfection." And this is all. Year after year from 1756 had this benefactor of his species been printing works which were the wonder and delight of the learned, and spread the fame of our town throughout the civilized world, yet, except in advertisements, we have no reference to his labours. These advertisements are very frequent and full of interesting facts relating to the works of the great printer. All these, together with large additional matter which his own indefatigable researches have enabled him to collect, are in the possession of a gentleman of Birmingham who has long been engaged in preparing a life of Baskerville. The life of such a man merits a volume to itself; and will prove a most valuable addition, not only to our local literature, but to the general literature of the country. Under these circumstances it will be sufficient here to record the death of, and to pay this passing tribute to the meritorious labours of John Baskerville.

The petition to the House of Commons on American affairs was supported by Mr. Burke, to whom the following letter of acknowledgment of his services was sent :—

February 20th, 1775.—The following is an authentic Copy of the Letter transmitted to Mr. Edmund Burke, by the Merchants, Traders, and Manufacturers of this Town.

To Edmund Burke, Esq.

"Birmingham, February 8th.

"Sir,—The Merchants and Manufacturers who have had a principal Share of the American Trade from this Town and Neighbourhood, beg your Acceptance, through our Hands, of their warmest Acknowledgements for your liberal Support of our Petition to the Hon. the House of Commons, wherein are stated the Evils we already feel, and the greater we have yet to apprehend from a continued Stagnation of so important a Branch of our Commerce as that with North America.

"At the same Time we also unite in expressing our particular Thanks for the Motion you was pleased to make for an Enquiry into the Manner of both the late Petitions from the Town of Birmingham having been obtained, an Enquiry which could scarcely have failed to give some useful Intelligence, and to have fully justified our Application to Parliament at so critical a juncture.

"We cannot wonder, Sir, that Defamation should have made its Appearance on such an Occasion as this, which is the notorious Evidence of a weak Cause, and whose Mischiefs we are persuaded will be as transient as its Efforts have been intemperate.

"We only take the Liberty, therefore, of adding our sincere Wishes, that you may long fill your distinguished Place in the British Senate: and that your persevering Endeavours to preserve the Rights of the Subject, to maintain the Prosperity of our Commerce, and to secure the Tranquility of this extensive Empire, may meet with

a Success adequate to the Patriotic Zeal with which they are animated. Being with the greatest Regard, Sir, your much obliged and most obedient Servants.

S. Freeth	J. Kettle	J. Sartin
J. Twigg	J. Richards	G. Russell
W. Russell	J. Smith	J. Welch
R. Rabone	W. Welch	J. Bingham
J. Wilkinson	J. Rickards	J. Walford."

Our next extract records an event which was not of frequent occurrence :—

May 1st, 1775.—Last Wednesday arrived here, in great Funeral Pomp, from Bath, the Remains of the late Marquis of Lothian; the same Evening the Corpse lay in State at the Dolphin Inn, in this Town, and the next Morning it was taken from hence in order to be interred in the Family Vault in Scotland.

A violent storm visited the town in June, which is thus recorded :—

June 19th, 1775.—On Saturday last in the Afternoon, we had the most violent Storm of Rain and Hail, attended with Thunder and Lightning, that can be remembered to have happened for many years past. It continued for upwards of an Hour without Intermission, during which Time many of the Streets were so overflowed, that the Inhabitants could neither go into, nor come out of their Houses, and others rendered wholly impassable for a considerable time. In Dudley Street in Particular the Water rose higher by several Inches, than it was ever known in the Memory of the oldest Inhabitant. The Claps of Thunder were long and tremendously loud; the Lightning remarkably vivid; and the Hail-stones uncommonly large. We have not yet heard of any material Damage being done.

In this month the *Gazette* was enlarged. The intention of the proprietors was thus communicated to the public. The statement which we italicise seems almost incredible; it is, however, too frequently made for there to be any doubt that advertisements were actually "held over":—

June 26th, 1775.—To the Public.—The Proprietors of the Birmingham Gazette, *having, from the numerous Increase of Advertisements for a long Time past, been unavoidably obliged to omit many that were received for Insertion*, till the Week following, frequently to the Injury of the Correspondents, and Themselves; they have found it necessary to remove this Impediment, and to show their grateful Respect to their Friends, to enlarge the Size of their Paper, by which means it becomes the largest in the whole Kingdom. The additional room thus acquired will enable them to give a speedy and punctual Admission to all Advertisements that may be sent for Insertion in their Paper. The Utility of advertising in which, on Account of its extensive circulation, cannot but be sufficiently obvious; And as they shall always be happy to receive, it will be their Pride, as it is their Duty, faithfully and diligently to execute the Commands of the Public.

Our next extract is a pleasant one, and proves that old Birmingham people were not entirely absorbed in money-making, good or bad :—

September 25th, 1775.—We hear that the Inhabitants of Deritend and Bordesley are encouraged by many of their Friends in Birmingham, to solicit their Assistance in order to enable them to purchase a Clock and a Ring of Bells to complete the Chapel in Deritend. We doubt not but the Subscription will meet with that Success due to so laudable an Undertaking.

Here is the record of the death of a good and useful man in his time. Few of our readers have probably heard of him, and still fewer have read his sermons :—

November 27th, 1775.—Early on Monday last, died here, after a lingering and painful illness, which he bore with the most exemplary Piety and Resignation, the Reverend Mr. Brailsford, many years Head Master of the Free Grammar School in this Town, and Rector of Middleton in the County of Warwick ;—He discharged the sacred Duties of his Profession, with a Zeal and Sincerity, every Way becoming a diligent and faithful Servant of that Church of which he was a distinguished Ornament, and in a manner that will endear his Memory to all who heard him. In the more amiable Walks of private Life, he was courteous, hospitable, and compassionate ; polite without Arrogance, and liberal without Ostentation. In a Word, he was an affectionate Husband ; a tender and indulgent Parent ; and an open and disinterested Friend ; and a truly benevolent and good Man.

On American affairs the inhabitants were generally with the government, and against the colonists in their great struggle. The following paragraph confirms this, and at the same time affords another illustration of the generous spirit which animated our forefathers.

December 11th, 1775.—We hear that some public-spirited Gentlemen in this Town have, with a Cheerfulness and Benevolence truly laudable, begun a Subscription for the Widows and Orphans of those brave and loyal Soldiers, who voluntarily sacrificed their Lives in Support of the constitutional Authority of their country in America.

On February 5, 1776, we learn the result of these efforts :—

The following Benefactions have been collected from a small Part of this Town, for the Relief of the distressed Widows, Orphans, and Soldiers in America, and transmitted by Mr. Wm. Holden, to Samuel Smith, Esq., Treasurer of the Society in London.—That Part of the Town which has not already been, will be collected very shortly, when it is hoped that every Person will contribute to so humane and benevolent a Design.

Then follows a list of subscriptions, the total amount exceeding £200.

The condition of the roads was a constant cause of complaint. In the town they were bad, but in the country they were horrible. A fall of snow, a rain storm, a frost, or a thaw rendered them impassable. A passage like the following enables us to measure the progress which we have made ; and affords a most remarkable contrast with our present modes of transit. It seems like a bit of subtle irony to speak of the Diligencies which travelled some six or eight miles an hour on

good roads, as "Vehicles of winged Swiftness." The paragraph is exceedingly interesting :—

January, 14, 1776.—The sudden and very heavy fall of Snow, during the Night of Saturday the 6th Instant, and on the succeeding Day, with little or no intermission, rendered the Roads in this Town, in many Places, extremely dangerous, and in others altogether impassable. We were in a Manner, wholly cut off from all Communication with the Metropolis, and the remoter Parts of the Kingdom, for Several Days. The Coaches and Waggons which usually set out from hence on the Sunday Evening, after having proceeded a few Miles on their respective Journeys, were, many of them either obliged to remain in the open Road, or to make an Asylum of the first Place they came to. Even the *Diligences*, those Vehicles of winged Swiftness, were checked in the Rapidity of their Career, and were content to move *more soberly* o'er the pathless snow-white Plains, or to rest in safety under the peaceful Sheds of their dejected Owners ! —The Mails, both by the General and Cross Posts, have been greatly retarded by the Impediments they had to encounter: the former by way of Coventry, which we should have received on Monday Morning last, did not arrive here till Yesterday at Noon; and all the subsequent ones on the same Road have been detained by the same Cause :—Of the Country Posts, those which have been able to travel, have exceeded their accustomed Stages many Days, while some have been kept back altogether; and from the present dreary and discouraging Aspect, it is perhaps not very easy to determine how long it will be before a general Intercourse is restored to the Traders throughout this Kingdom, who must have suffered many Inconveniences from so great an Interruption to their Business and Correspondence.

It were surely a most laudable Conduct in the Commissioners of the Roads to exert themselves on such Occasions with becoming Spirit, in order to the more speedy Removal of such Obstructions, which though but of short Duration, must in a trading and commercial Country like this, be attended with a manifest Injury to many of his Majesty's subjects.

A local consequence of this fall of snow will be seen from the following advertisement :—

January 22nd, 1776.—Swan Inn, Birmingham. During the Continuance of the Snow, the Birmingham Machine will set out every Monday and Thursday Mornings, at Four o'Clock; also, the Diligence, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Mornings, at Six o'Clock.—N.B. The late great Fall of Snow, and Succession of the Frost, renders it too dangerous for the Proprietors, at present, to attempt to send their Carriages in the Night.

Immediate Information will be given as soon as the Roads are deemed passable for the Evening Journeys.

We have now reached the time when the inconvenience arising from the circulation of bad half-pence had become intolerable. We have already quoted several passages referring to this subject. On January 29, 1776, the following letter was published, and public attention directed to a very scandalous practice which then generally prevailed :—

TO THE PRINTER OF THE BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

The Scandalous Practice of purchasing bad Half-pence at near 20 per Cent. cheaper than the Mint Coin, is now become so common and notorious in this Town, and some Places adjacent, that it is high Time effectual Means were taken to prevent their Currency. If Change for a Guinea be wanted, the Request is granted upon Condition of receiving Five or Seven Shillings in Half-pence, which are so bad in General, as cannot be circulated in any Place where this iniquitous Practice is not carried on. It is too notorious that Mr. T——, in London, formerly an Inhabitant of this Town, has sold considerable Quantities here and in the Neighbourhood. If all honest Persons would absolutely refuse to take such as are obviously Counterfeits, the Growth of this Evil would be checked, and a few Informations (which I have Reason to believe will soon be laid against both Vendors and Purchasers), would perhaps totally eradicate it. Unless some spirited Measures are speedily adopted, it is hardly to be conceived what Mischief and Confusion will ensue. The Retail Dealer, who in the common Course of Trade receives Half-pence to a great Amount, will sustain a very material Injury. The longer the Delay, the greater will be his loss. In the mean Time the poor Artificer suffers daily : An industrious Nailor for Instance, who labours hard all the Week for four or five Shillings, receives a Part even of this small Pittance in such base, unlawful Coin, which he takes with him into the Country, and offers for the Necessaries of Life ; but there the Tradesman refuses them : they then either remain upon the poor Man's Hands, or are more injuriously employed at the Ale-house, to the manifest Destruction of his Health, and perhaps the Ruin of his Family. These are not mere suppositions. Facts of this Nature occur every Day. The Necessity then of putting a Stop to this Evil cannot but be obvious to every Man. Policy and Humanity both recommend and enforce it.

AN ENEMY TO IMPOSITION.

By the next paragraph we learn something of how this bad money was produced :—

February 5th, 1776.—Last Week two Men, who a short Time since came from London and settled here, were committed to Warwick Gaol for Coining.

It was not likely that such an evil could be tolerated. The effects on trade, and the consequences apprehended from the continuance of this shameful wickedness are vividly narrated in this

“Extract of a Letter from a Trader in London to his Correspondent in this Town,
dated February 6th.

“To such an enormous Height is the Circulation of Counterfeit Copper Money now risen, that the Tradesmen and others of this Metropolis begin to apprehend the most serious Consequences therefrom, unless some speedy and vigorous measures are immediately adopted for the Suppression of this alarming and increasing Evil. In order to accomplish this salutary End, a Meeting of a very numerous Body of the most respectable and opulent Traders of this City was held at Garraway's Coffee-House, on Wednesday last ; when besides a Resolution to enforce vigorously the Acts of Parliament passed for punishing Persons who shall be proved guilty of buying, selling, receiving, paying, or otherwise putting off, any such counterfeit Copper Money, not melted down or

cut in pieces, at a lower rate than its Denomination doth import ; they have, in a public Advertisement declared, that as they have great Reason to believe divers Persons in Trade, do encourage and carry on such unlawful Traffick, by buying up large Quantities of Counterfeit Half-pence, in direct Defiance of the Statute adjudging such Persons guilty of Felony ; and as the same does not hold out any Reward to those who may be Instrumental in bringing such Offenders to Justice, the said Body of Traders have therefore offered a Reward of *Forty Pounds*, to be paid by the Solicitor of his Majesty's Mint, in one Month after Conviction, in such Shares and Proportions (if more than one be concerned in convicting such Offenders) as he shall think proper. This laudable and public-spirited Proceeding, which is well supported by powerful Subscription opened at several Bankers for that Purpose, will, it is not doubted, have its desired Effect here ; and should similar Associations be formed in all the Manufacturing Towns throughout this Kingdom, there would be every Reason to expect an effectual stop to a Practice, in itself highly illegal and infamous, and materially injurious to the honest upright Trader.—Yours, &c.”

The measures taken by the Birmingham tradesmen to meet and remove this evil will be learned from the following extracts :—

February 19, 1776.—On Tuesday last a Meeting of the principal Inhabitants of this Town was held in the Chamber over the Old Cross, when it appearing absolutely necessary that an immediate stop should be put to the Circulation of Counterfeit Half-pence ; it was resolved to offer a Reward of Twenty Pounds, to such Persons whose Evidence shall convict any Offenders herein.—N.B. The real Value of 2s. 6d. worth of Counterfeit Half-pence is not more than 3d.

Birmingham, February 19, 1776.—At a Meeting held this Day pursuant to public Notice, at the Chamber over the Old Cross, the Inhabitants of this Town taking into Consideration the many Evils which must accrue from the great Increase of COUNTERFEIT HALF-PENCE, UNANIMOUSLY AGREED, to discountenance the Circulation thereof, as far as lay in their Power, and particularly by neither receiving nor giving away the same ; and they do hereby earnestly request all other Inhabitants, not then present, to join them in a Resolution so necessary at this Juncture, for the Reputation and Welfare of this Town. And the more effectually to DETER all Persons from either Counterfeiting the Copper Coin, or in any wise contributing to so iniquitous an Abuse of the Community, as also to encourage those who shall use their Endeavours to DETECT such Practices : It was at the same Time agreed to publish the following Extracts from two Acts of Parliament, which have been made in Reference hereto.

The first in the 15th year of his late Majesty, whereby it is enacted, “That whosoever shall apprehend, prosecute and cause to be convicted any Person or Persons who shall have counterfeited the Copper Coin of this Realm, such Prosecutor or Prosecutors shall be entitled to a Reward of TEN POUNDS.”

The second is from an Act of Parliament passed in the 11th year of his present Majesty, wherein it is enacted, “That if any Person or Persons, shall from and after the 24th Day of June, 1771, buy, sell, take, receive, pay, or put off any Counterfeit Copper Money, not melted down or cut in Pieces, at or for a lower Rate of Value than the same by its Denomination doth or shall import, or was counterfeited for, every such Person and Persons shall be adjudged GUILTY OF FELONY.”

And Whereas there is Reason to suspect that some Persons in Trade may have much encouraged the Counterfeiting the Copper Coin, by buying Considerable Quantities thereof at a lower Rate than the same doth import, in Violation of the aforesaid Act; and there being no Reward provided thereby, for Persons who shall be instrumental in bringing such Offenders to Justice, It was also thereby agreed, in Consequence of a Subscription entered into this Day, That a Reward of TWENTY POUNDS be offered, and accordingly it is now offered, to any one who shall apprehend, prosecute, and cause to be Convicted, any Person or Persons residing within this Town who shall have committed any of the Offences set forth in the last recited Clause of the above mentioned Act. And Notice is hereby further given, That the several Officers of this Town, for the Time being, together with any other Inhabitants, whose attendance they may desire, are appointed as a Committee, to take under their immediate Cognizance the Grievance here complained of, and to receive and pay such Proportions of the Sums that are or may be on this Occasion Subscribed, as any Prosecutor or Prosecutors of the Above said Offenders shall be entitled to, in Consequence of the Resolutions of the above Meeting.

N.B. All other Inhabitants of the Town, who are willing to support this Undertaking, are requested as soon as may be, to send their Names, with the Mention of what Sum they intend to subscribe, either to some of the above said Officers of the Town, or to Pearson and Rollason, Printers, or M. Swinney.

We shall see that for a time these efforts were almost in vain. The evil continued, and it was long before Birmingham was freed from the disgrace of being the centre whence flowed the apparently exhaustless stream of counterfeit half-pence.

Our next extract is one of especial interest. It contains the first reference we have found to the labours of James Watt—labours which were destined to change the whole aspect of modern industry, and to produce results surpassing those of fairy-land or the domain of Romance. Without any apparent consciousness of the vast importance of the event recorded, the reporter dwells longer on the subject than is usual in these early papers, and really gives us a good description of the engine then “set to work.”

March 11th, 1776.—On Friday last a Steam Engine constructed upon Mr. Watt's new Principles was set to work at Bloomfield Colliery, near Dudley, in the Presence of its Proprietors, Messrs. Bentley, Banner, Wallin, and Westley; and a Number of Scientific Gentlemen whose Curiosity was excited to see the first Movements of so singular and so powerful a Machine; and whose Expectations were fully gratified by the Excellence of its performance. The Workmanship of the Whole did not pass unnoticed, nor unadmired. All the Iron Foundry Parts (which are unparalleled for truth) were executed by Mr. Wilkinson; the Condensor, with the Valves, Pistons, and all the small Work at Soho, by Mr. Harrison, and others; and the Whole was erected by Mr. Perrins, conformable to the Plans and under the Directions of Mr. Watt. From the first Moment of its setting to Work, it made about 14 or 15 Strokes per Minute, and emptied the Engine Pit (which

is about 90 Feet deep, and stood 57 Feet high in Water) in less than an hour. The Gentlemen then adjourned to Dinner, which was provided in that Neighbourhood, and the Workmen followed their Example. After which, according to custom, a Name was given to the Machine, viz., PARLIAMENT ENGINE, amidst the Acclamations of a number of joyous and ingenious Workmen. This Engine is applied to the working of a Pump 14 Inches and a Half Diameter, which it is capable of doing to the Depth of 300 Feet, or even 360 if wanted, with one fourth of the Fuel that a common Engine would require to produce the same Quantity of Power. The Cylinder is 50 Inches Diameter, and the length of the Stroke is 7 Feet.—The liberal Spirit shewn by the Proprietors of Bloomfield in ordering this, the first large Engine of the Kind that hath ever been made, and in rejecting a Common one which they had begun to erect, entitle them to the Thanks of the Public ; for by this Example the Doubts of the Inexperienced are dispelled, and the Importance and Usefulness of the Invention is finally decided.—These Engines are not worked by the Pressure of the Atmosphere. Their Principles are very different from all others. They were invented by Mr. Watt (late of Glasgow) after many Years Study, and a great Variety of expensive and laborious Experiments ; and are now carried into Execution under his and Mr. Boulton's Directions at Boulton and Fothergill's Manufactory near this Town ; where they have nearly finished four of them, and have established a Fabrick for them upon so extensive a Plan as to render them applicable to almost all Purposes where Mechanical Power is required, whether great or small, or where the Motion wanted is either rotatory or reciprocating.

The Sunday question is once more troubling the authorities ; and again an unobserved notice was published. The last sentence is especially noticeable. Such churchwardens would have stopped the birds from singing on a Sunday if they had possessed the power.

Birmingham, May 11, 1776.—The Church Wardens of this Town give this Public Notice, That if any Butchers, Bakers, Hucksters, or any other Shop-Keepers are found exercising their Trades on the LORD'S DAY, or any Publican selling Ale or other Liquors, during Divine Service, they will be prosecuted as the Law directs :—And whereas several Men and Boys have been seen playing at Ball, and other Games on the above Day ; if any are guilty of the like Practice in future, they will be punished accordingly.

On June 24, the proprietors of the *Gazette* make the following announcement :—

To the Public.—Any addition to the Taxes already levied on that Bounty, to which, not only the Proprietors of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE, but of every other Newspaper throughout the Kingdom, are so highly indebted, must be attended with the utmost Reluctance and Regret. Painful, however, as the office may be, it is their Duty to acquaint their Friends and the Public at large, that in Pursuance of an Act of last Session of Parliament, for laying an additional Halfpenny on Newspapers, they will be reduced to the disagreeable Necessity of advancing the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE to *Three-pence*, to take Place on *Monday* the 8th of July next, the Act specifying the 5th of the same Month for that Purpose. They wish, nevertheless, to have their Readers thoroughly convinced that they shall not derive the smallest Advantage from this extra

Duty ; but on the contrary, sustain a material Diminution of their usual profits. Under the Influence of this Consideration the Proprietors hereof flatter themselves they shall be found still worthy of that Patronage and Support, with which the Public has so long honoured and rewarded their Labours.

In the Course of the present summer, the unhappy and distracted state of *American Affairs*, will probably give Birth to Events of the most interesting and important Nature to this Country. Whatever those Events may be, whenever they arrive, or however long they may be in the Detail, the Public may rest assured of receiving through the channel of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE, not only the *earliest*, but at the same time the most *authentic* and *circumstantial* Information. Their Advertisements, numerous as they are, shall, on such Occasions be only a secondary Object ; and their Readers may credit the Sincerity of this Declaration—that they WILL at *all Times* leave out such a Number as shall make sufficient Room, not only for the *Whole of every Article of Intelligence from America*, but also of every Domestic Occurrence deserving the Public attention. They are determined not to give Place to trite and uninteresting Matters ; nor will they yield to any of their Competitors either in the Quality or Quantity of what is really worth selecting ; fully persuading themselves that such unremitting Assiduity will not go altogether unnoticed, nor unrewarded.

On July 22 a “compensation” is offered for the additional half-penny by an enlargement of the paper.

To Compensate, in some Measure, to the Public, for the additional duty imposed by the Government on News-papers, the Proprietors have at a very considerable Expence, greatly enlarged the Birmingham Gazette, by which means they shall be enabled to supply their Readers with as much Variety, and as great a quantity of Intelligence as most other Country Papers, their Gazette being at least one-fourth larger than many, and containing more Matter than any, Papers published in this Kingdom.

In this year we had a notable visitor : no less a personage than the Prime Minister of England :—

September 9th, 1776.—On Friday last the Right Hon. Lord North, his Lady, and Family, arrived at the Castle Inn, in this Town, in their Way to the Right Hon. the Earl of Dartmouth's ; and Yesterday they visited the Soho, and Mr. Clay's Manufactory here.

In this year a cattle-market was established in Deritend. The announcement appeared on the 14th of October.

Birmingham, October 11th, 1776.—Notice is hereby given, That there will be a MARKET kept every Monday for the Sale of Cattle in Deritend : and for the encouragement of Graziers, Farmers and others, the Butchers have entered into an Agreement, to give the same every Assistance they can ; the First Market will be on Monday the 28th of this Inst. October.

To the advertisement of November 4 was added an N.B. stating that “there was a good market last Monday of all sorts of cattle, pigs, &c., most of which were sold.” The market continued to be held for a long time, but no notice of its discontinuance appears.

The limited knowledge of the true principles of political economy which is displayed in many of the acts of the good old days finds a curious illustration in such a notice as this :—

November 4th, 1776.—To the Inhabitants of Birmingham.—Whereas the Town of Birmingham hath for a long Time past laboured under great oppressions from the unwarrantable Practices of Forestallors, Regraters, and Ingrossers, who advance the Price of Provisions in open Defiance of the Laws, and are permitted to escape the Punishment they deserve for Want of a proper Fund to support the High Bailiff in the Execution of his Office. The present High Bailiff, desirous of contributing to the Suppression of this great and increasing Evil, pledges himself to the Town, that if a proper Fund is raised by Subscription, and deposited in the Bank to indemnify him, and a Committee of Gentlemen is appointed, with whom he may confer, no Endeavours shall be wanting on his Part to prosecute to the utmost every Person who shall be found offending against the Laws of his Country, and to establish good order in the Market.

This communication gives us a good idea of the extent of travelling in the town at this time :—

January 6th, 1777.—The following table, says a Correspondent, which shews, at one View, the very astonishing Sum paid Annually for the Carriage of Passengers only, to and from this Town, in Stage Coaches and Diligencies, is a strong Proof that the Trade and Manufacturers of Birmingham form no inconsiderable Part of the Strength and Greatness of the British Empire :—

To LONDON.									
				s.	d.			£	s.
Castle.....	12	Carr. 1 Day	29	0	3	Pass.	2,714	8	
"	6	— 2 —	20	0	3	—	1,357	4	
Swan	12	— 1 —	29	0	3	—	2,714	8	
"	6	— 1 —	25	0	4	—	1,560	0	
"	8	— 2 —	21	0	6	—	2,496	0	
"	4	— 1 —	21	0	6	—	1,248	0	
Dolphin	4	— 1 —	21	0	6	—	1,248	0	
								<hr/>	
52 Per Week.								Annual	13,338 0
Carr.									
Dolphin	4	to BRISTOL	18	0	6	Pass.	1,123	4	
"	6	"	21	0	3	—	982	16	
Castle.....	6	"	22	6	3	—	2,106	0	
								<hr/>	
16 Per Week								Annual	4,212 0
4 to SHEFFIELD								21 0 6 Pass.	1,310 4
4 to COVENTRY								4 6 6 —	280 16
<hr/>									
Yearly Number of Carriages.	{	2,704	LONDON..				£13,338	0	
		832	BRISTOL.....				4,212	0	
		208	SHEFFIELD.....				1,310	4	
		218	COVENTRY				280	16	
<hr/>									
Carriages	3,952						Total Amount	£19,141	0

We now arrive at the first account of a trade dispute which we have met with. The quarrel was between the masters and journeymen tailors. In *Swinney's Chronicle* of February 13, this advertisement appeared :—

Wanted Immediately. One Hundred Journeymen Taylors, to work Piece-Work in the Town of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick. The wages will be such as to enable a man to get 16s. per Week, and upwards upon an Average. Apply to William Moystin, No. 130, Moor-Street, Birmingham.

On the following Monday the men published this statement :—

February 17th, 1777.—To all Journeymen Taylors.—Whereas the Master Taylors of this Town of Birmingham, have inserted an Advertisement in last Thursday's Paper, for one Hundred Men to come to work Piece-Work at such Prices as, they say, a Man can get Sixteen Shillings per Week ; which we the journeymen declare to be false, as we know the Prices are Stipulated so, that he must be an extraordinary Hand that can get Twelve Shillings per Week ; and as our wages have for some time been to some Men Fourteen Shillings, and to others Fifteen and Sixteen Shillings per week, and that of the Master's own Raising in Opposition to each other, and we are at this present Time all out of Work on the Occasion ; we hope there are no Persons, who know what Trade is, that would comply to such arbitrary Power, nor come to this Town to Work under Us ; as we can assure the Public, that the Masters of this Town can very well afford to give the above Wages :—But they want to gain Fortunes out of poor Men's Labour, being not contented with cent. per cent. as will be made known to the Public very soon.—

GEORGE HANLEY.

It would appear that the public sympathy was with the men, for in the next paper these lines were published :—

February 24th, 1777.

Epigram to the Master Taylors.

Your Proceedings refrain,

'Twill be Labour in vain,

For Hands round the Country to hunt !

Then pray be content

With a clear Cent per Cent,

And pocket the present affront.

The masters next inserted this advertisement :—

Wanted immediately, in the Town of Birmingham, 40 or 50 JOURNEYMEN TAYLORS to Work Piece-work ; the Wages are such that a good Hand can earn 16 or 18s. per Week, and not work more than common Hours, and by applying to the under-written Masters, may article for constant Employ for any Time they chuse. The Men will not be subject to a House of Call, as none will be employed but such as call at the Masters' Houses, and are free from all Combinations.

N.B. The above-mentioned Masters think it their Duty to return their sincere Thanks to their Customers for their Indulgence during the present Dispute ; and now inform them that they have such a Supply of Men as to be able to supply their Friends on the shortest Notice.

To which the men replied :—

March 3rd, 1777.—To all Journeymen Taylors.—Whereas the Master Taylors of the Town of BIRMINGHAM have advertised for Fifty or Sixty Men to come to work at Piece Work with them at eight Shillings per Suit: Be it known to all Men, that it is not for Want of Men to work for them; but the Reason is, that the present Men do not chuse to work Piece work at all, on Account of their late Sufferings by it, for instance, a Master in this Town will keep twelve or fourteen Men, when seven or eight could do all his Work, and have Time to spare, so that they do not keep their Men, but starve them; we the present Journeymen, are willing to serve our Masters on the same Terms as before, which was at Day Wages, and that of their own raising; but they have bound themselves in a Bond as they say. We therefore hope that no Man will act contrary to the present Men, as they are all well Wishers to the Community, and can assure them, the Masters can well afford to give the same Wages they have done for some Time past; and they also say that the Men shall not be subject to a House of Call, but it is well known that a House of Call has been an ancient Custom, both in London, and in all other capital Towns in this Kingdom, for our Trade, and that it is more to the Master's Advantage than a Man's; but our Masters want to impoverish us by an arbitrary Power, so that we cannot support our Families, and we the Journeymen do not chuse to submit to it, which is the Cause of the present Dispute. We are, Gentlemen, your humble Servants, the JOURNEYMEN TAYLORS of the Town of Birmingham.

HENRY EVANS, &c.

The men displayed some wisdom in this dispute, and anticipated the method lately advised under similar circumstances. It was an early attempt to settle a trade difference by co-operation. The men combined, and appealed to the public for work. The record of this misunderstanding and its consequences are extremely interesting. Here is the men's appeal :—

March 24, 1777.—To the PUBLIC of the Town of BIRMINGHAM and the Country adjacent.—Whereas the Master Taylors of this Town have advertised for a Number of Hands to come to work Piece Work for them at such Prices as they may chuse to give; and their late Men have suffered so much by it for many years past, that they do not chuse to work Piece Work at all. And as many of the capital Masters have chose to employ unexperienced Country Lads, rather than good workmen, which they were supplied with, (and that in Justice they cannot deny) for which Reason, WE, the under-mentioned Men, late Servants to those Masters, desirous that the Public may not be imposed on, have taken this Method to inform their Friends and the Public, that they intend carrying on the above Trade in all its various Branches. Those Ladies and Gentlemen, who please to favour us with their commands may depend on having their orders completed in the newest Fashion, at the shortest Notice, and on the most reasonable Terms, by their most humble servants, the under-mentioned Persons.

N.B. All Journeymen who come to this Town, are desired to apply to the House of Call, at the Coach and Horses in Bell Street, where they will meet with good Encouragement.—None but good Workmen need Apply.

The advertisement both of masters and men are repeated for six weeks, and then without a word as to the results of the dispute the subject drops. During the whole period of this contest, with the exception of the epigram quoted, there is no reference to its existence except in the advertisements. At the present time it would have afforded matter for columns on columns of reports and correspondence, to say nothing of the leaders which able editors would have written to point the moral if not to adorn a tale. But reports were almost, and leaders entirely, unknown to the newspapers of that date. Here is another trade notice of the period.

April 7, 1777.—We are informed that the Merchants and Factors in this Town are determined not to give any Advance for Wood-Screws; and that unless the Masters in that Branch comply with serving them on the usual Terms, they are determined to apply where they can be got for much less Money.

The next extract refers to a state of things for ever and for ever gone. It is difficult for us at this time to recall the feelings of terror and fear which such an announcement would excite in the minds of the people of that day. The press-gangs were formidable bodies, and their presence was dreaded in every place throughout the country. The tales of the cruelty perpetrated by these lawless men make the blood boil with indignation; and hundreds of families had cause to curse the existence of a system which produced horrors scarcely exceeded by anything we read in the annals of the slave-trade, to which it bore a striking resemblance. In the paragraph which we are about to quote there is a set off in the fact that the work was terribly expensive.

August 25th, 1777.—The Press is now very warm here and in the Neighbourhood. We hear a Gang is stationed at Gloucester, but they procure so few Men that the Expense of each is esteemed at no less than Fifty Pounds a Man to Government.

Press gangs and earthquakes range well together, and it is curious that the next event recorded should be the briefest statement of such a visitation :—

September 22nd, 1777.—The Earthquake, which last Week threw several Parts of this Kingdom into the most dreadful Consternation, was felt very sensibly by many of the Congregation in Deritend Chapel, near this Town.

The year 1777 was a calamitous one for this country. Notwithstanding the efforts of Lord Chatham to influence the government against the American war, that suicidal and disastrous contest was

continued. On the 30th of May the rapidly dying patriot was brought down to the House of Lords, wrapped in flannel, and the last effort of his life was his noble speech and ineffectual motion to stop the hostilities with that country. After a few small victories of the British forces under General Burgoyne, that officer and his army were surrounded by the American forces and compelled to surrender to General Gates at Saratoga. The news produced the greatest excitement and consternation in England. On December 11 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. But the country was as resolute as ever in supporting and continuing the fatal struggle. Birmingham was loyal to the government; and our next extract will show the part which the town took at this crisis :—

Birmingham, Jan. 21, 1778.—On Friday Evening last a Meeting of some of the Inhabitants of this Town was held at the Coffee House in the Cherry Orchard, to take into Consideration the present situation of Public Affairs, when a Subscription was immediately opened for the Support of his Majesty's Government, and upwards of 1,200*l.* instantly and most cheerfully subscribed.—To make this Measure as diffusive as possible a Meeting of the Inhabitants who are disposed to promote this most necessary undertaking, is requested at the Hotel, at three o'Clock this Afternoon.

The gentleman who called this meeting, but whose name is not given, was so pleased with his speech that he published it as an advertisement. There is, however, nothing in it worth transcribing. On Wednesday, January 14, Lord Warwick called a meeting of the County, which was held in that city, and it was resolved to raise a county regiment of volunteers for the service of the King. On January 19, we read :—

The Money already subscribed by the Inhabitants of this Town, towards raising Men for his Majesty's service, amounts to upwards of Two Thousand Pounds; and there is every Reason to believe, as his Majesty has condescended to honour the Town by his Acceptance of the Men raised here, that the Subscription will soon be full.

Next week this information is given :—

Birmingham, January 26th.—We hear that an Express arrived at Warwick on Thursday last, from the Earl of Warwick, with Information, that his Majesty highly approves of the Plan his Lordship laid before the County of Warwick, on the 14th Instant, for raising a Regiment for the Service of Government. From another Correspondent we are assured, that when his Majesty signified his Royal Approbation of the Zeal and Affection manifested by the County of Warwick, in their Intentions of raising a Regiment for the Public Service, he was graciously pleased to inform Lord Warwick :—that the Men which the County may raise shall be formed into a Regiment and agreeably to their own Request, be called The Warwickshire Regiment. The Choice to be left to the County of

either the 14th or 6th Regiment, and that the men shall either be entirely drafted, in order to leave the whole of one of those Regiments entirely vacant for the Warwickshire Levies, or that some Men shall be sent down with the Officers of the Regiment they chuse, as shall be most agreeable to the County.

February 2nd, 1778.—We have the Pleasure to inform our Readers that the Subscription set on Foot in this Place to raise Men for the support of Government will now be prosecuted with the utmost Vigour, his Majesty having most graciously accepted the offer of a Regiment, which is to take the name of the Warwickshire Regiment, and the several companies raised here to take the Name of the Birmingham Companies; for which Purpose the Officers of the Sixth Regiment will be ordered to march into the County to recruit and receive the Men. And we have the further Pleasure to assure our Readers, that a Meeting of the County will soon be called by the Lord Lieutenant, to promote this laudable measure; of course, the Report so industriously propagated, that his Lordship disapproved of it, was totally without Foundation.

On February 5 Lord Abingdon moved a resolution in the House of Lords affirming that this method of raising troops was unconstitutional and illegal. This was rejected, and the work went on with increased enthusiasm. And on February 23 the *Gazette* says:—

We have unquestionable Authority to assert, that the Lord Lieutenant of the County of Warwick has subscribed the Sum of Five Hundred Pounds, towards the Warwickshire Regiment; and in a few Days Places will be appointed where Books will be lodged in this Town, for raising a Fund to enlist Men into the said Regiment, who are to be formed into Companies, and called the Birmingham Companies.

The “poet Freeth” helped on the work in his peculiar way, and gave to the world his song “The Birmingham Volunteers.” The next paragraph concludes the references made to this subject for some time:—

Birmingham, March 16, 1778.—Last Saturday arrived here a Party of the 6th Regiment on Foot, into which the Warwickshire Levies are to be incorporated, and when compleated that Corps is to be called the Warwickshire Regiment, in Honour of the Loyalty and Zeal manifested by the County in Support of Government, at this critical and important Junction of public Affairs.

April 27, 1778.—Last Week the Officers of the 6th Regiment, into which the Warwickshire Levies are to be incorporated, at the Head of the Division of that Corps stationed here, made a public Procession through the Town, to encourage Volunteers to enlist. They were preceded by a blue Flag, a Band of martial Music, a large Piece of Roast Beef, several Loaves of Bread, and a Barrel of Beer, and were attended by a great Concource of People. In the Course of the Week, we are told, many promising young Fellows offered themselves and were enlisted.

The unfortunate General Burgoyne found much sympathy amongst the people. He paid a visit to Birmingham, and this was the way in which he was received by the enthusiastic inhabitants:—

Birmingham, August 17, 1778.—On Monday last, in the Afternoon, arrived here from Bath, on his Way to his Seat in Lancashire, attended by two Servants only, Lieutenant General Burgoyne. His Arrival was no sooner known, than the Bells began ringing and a great Number of People assembled before the Swan Inn, where the General had stopped. After some little Refreshment, he proceeded to New-Hall Street, to view Clay's Paper Manufactory there; by which Time the Spectators were become very numerous, both in the Street, and at the Windows of the Houses therein, who all discovered an uncommon Propensity to see this unfortunate Commander, whose Conduct in America had been the Subject of universal Conversation in the political World. The General, after viewing the Manufactory, came to the Door, and was received with loud Acclamations, which he politely returned by bowing: then getting into his Carriage, he pursued his Journey to Soho (where he spent a considerable Time) amidst reiterated Shouts of the Populace, who seemed happy in the Indulgence of their Curiosity.

But now we leave "wars and rumours of wars" to return to the works of peace; and our first item of news is very gratifying:—

April 20, 1778.—The following Letter received last Week by the Committee of the Birmingham Canal Navigation, from their Superintendant of the Locks, affords an irrefragable Proof of the great Utility of a new-invented Steam Engine, lately erected on the said Canal, under the immediate Direction of Mess. Boulton and Watt, the Patentees.

"To the Committee of the Birmingham Canal.

"Smethwick Locks, April 17.

"Gentlemen,—On Wednesday last, Mr. Smeaton made an accurate Trial of the Steam Engine erected lately on the Canal at this Place, and it appeared that it did not consume more than 64lb. of Coal an Hour, when working at the rate of 11 Strokes a Minute (each Stroke being Five Feet Ten Inches). The Diameter of the working Barrel of the Pump is 20 Inches; and the perpendicular Height of the Column of Water is 26 Feet 10 Inches and a Half, equal to 11lb. 3-qrs. upon every square Inch of the Piston: The Quantity of Water raised at each Stroke is equal to 12 3-qrs. Cubic Feet.

"Mr. Smeaton declared, that the best Newcomen's Engine, with all his late Improvements (which are very considerable) would have required 194-lb. of Coal to raise an equal Quantity of Water to the same height; and that a common Engine without those Improvements would consume a still greater Quantity.

"When the Asperities on the different working parts of this Engine are worn off, and the Cylinder is eased and finished, as is intended, I have not a Doubt but it will be an Advantage to the Proprietors of 20 per cent. more.

"I am, Gentlemen, your most humble Servant,

"S. BULL."

The Horse fair had hitherto been held in Ann Street, or Mount Pleasant, or the Haymarket, as this street was then called, but this year it was removed to the place now called by that name, but which then rejoiced in the cognomen of Brickiln-Lane. The notification of this change was made on August 10, 1778:—

Birmingham Horse Fair.—By Order of the Officers and Commissioners of this Town, the Horse Fair will in future be kept in that spacious Street called Brickiln-Lane, at the upper end of Smallbrook-Street, where there is exceeding good riding Ground, and every other Accommodation will be provided for the Encouragement of Horse Dealers, &c.—N.B. The Toll Book will be kept at Thomas Whateley's at the upper End of Smallbrook Street. Birmingham, August 10, 1778.

The town was this year visited by another shock of an earthquake.

September 21, 1778.—Last Thursday in the Forenoon, a violent Shock of an Earthquake was sensibly perceived in this Town, and its Neighbourhood, by the jarring of Windows, rattling of China, and other Commotions, which usually accompany such alarming Phenomina.

The next extract reveals a lively state of things :—

November 23, 1778.—The Surveyors of the Highways in the Town and Parish of Birmingham, finding themselves liable to many Inconveniences and Hazards if they attempt to raise Money for the Repairs of the Roads by a Levy on the Inhabitants, as has been usual heretofore, such Mode being contrary to the Laws now existing; they have therefore agreed and determined, to the best of their Abilities, to proceed in their Office, according to the Directions of the Act passed in the Thirteenth Year of the Reign of his present Majesty.

A notice published on the same day affords us another bit of interesting local news :—

November 23, 1778.—Considering the many necessary Repairs wanting to be done, the Surveyors, with the Consent and Approbation of the Justices, at a Special Sessions, held the 26 October last, at the Public Office, have fixed the Statute Duty, for the Parish of Birmingham, at Six Days, for the Year ensuing.

The base copper coin still troubled the tradesmen of the town, and again an ineffectual attempt was made to put a stop to its circulation.

December 7, 1778.—At a Meeting of the principal Tradesmen of this Town on Tuesday last, at Cooke's Coffee House, in Cherry-Street, an Agreement was entered into and signed by the Company present, to put an immediate Stop to the Circulation of base Copper Coin, by prosecuting with the utmost Rigour, every Person who shall be found guilty of vending the same, and the Expences incurred by such Prosecution to be defrayed by the Inhabitants generally, out of a Fund to be raised for that Purpose.

Little good was effected by this apparently energetic effort to lessen the evil; for on January 17, 1780, we find the subject thus referred to :—

January 17th, 1780.—The amazing Quantity of Counterfeit Halfpence now in Circulation, and the great Effrontery with which they are given in Payment, in open Contempt, or Defiance of the Laws for their Suppression, have induced our Public Officers to determine upon pursuing the most rigorous measures immediately, against all persons who shall be proved in any way encouraging or carrying on such scandalous and unlawful Practices.

The following extract affords further evidence of the progress which invention was then making, and is one more illustration of the activity of the period :—

Birmingham, January 17th, 1780.—To all Noblemen, Gentlemen and Others, who are concerned in Navigable Canals. From the Commencement of Canals in these Parts, ever since they have been used, they have been injured more or less by the Frosts, so that Boats could not pass along, by Means of the Thickness of the Ice.

To prevent the Inconvenience, I have a model of a piece of Moving Machinery which will answer every End and Purpose that can be required for Clearing the Ice before any Vessel passing upon a Canal, and which I am ready to communicate to any Nobleman, Gentleman, Community or Communities, if we can agree upon Terms.

This Piece of Machinery will clear a Passage for a Boat to pass, if the Canal be Forty Miles in Length ; which said Machinery will be made of such a Model, that if the Boats are of one Construction, the said Machinery may be moved from one Boat to another, whenever they please to remove it, and that if they have a body of Water that will carry their Vessels, and can pass through the Locks, no ice will be able to withstand it. If they had been in Possession of the above Machine, the Vessels might now have passed upon any Canal. That any Nobleman, Gentleman, Community or Communities willing to encourage this Undertaking may have a sight of the said Model immediately after the Agreement. This said Piece of Machinery will be made upon such a Construction, that if the Workman or Workmen whom they chuse shall make it, if any Part or Parts of it trail, it may be taken in Pieces and repaired, without damaging any other Part of the said Machine, and that when the Frosty Season is over, it may be kept for the same Use many years.—For Particulars enquire of Joseph Baker, the Lowermost House, Great Charles-street, Birmingham.

In this year the government ordered and the people kept a general fast ; at least, if we are to accept the statement made in the following paragraph, without any qualification, they did so in this town :—

Birmingham, Monday, February 7th.—Friday last being the Day of the General Fast, commanded by Proclamation, the same was observed in this Town, by all Ranks of People, with the greatest Solemnity and Devotion.

Our next quotation affords us some authentic information as to the size of the town at this period. On Tuesday, February 8, a Petition signed by the Church-wardens and Overseers was presented to the House of Commons, which set forth that :—

Though there be upwards of 8,000 Houses in this Town, not more than 2,823 are rated to the Poor, and many Thousands are not assessed to either Church or Poor ; and there is but too great Reason to believe the Landlords and Owners of such unrated and unassessed Houses, let them, on that very Account, at much higher Rents than they would otherwise be enabled to do ;—that the Sum levied and to be levied on the Inhabitants for the Maintenance of the Poor only, for the present Year, will amount to the heavy Sum of Nine Thousand and Five Hundred Pounds ; that this burthensome

Charge falling on the Occupiers of so small a Proportion of the whole Number of Houses, is considered as a great Grievance ; and therefore humbly pray that leave be given to bring in a Bill to oblige all Landlords or Owners of Houses under Ten Pounds a Year to Pay the Church and Poor's Rates for the same.—The Petition was read immediately, and referred to a Committee to examine into the Allegation therein set forth, and to report the same to the House.

These 8,000 houses will give us a population of about 40,000 ; and the poor rates for the year were no less than £9,500. At the present time we have a population of about 350,000, and the poor rates for the year ending Lady-day, 1867, amounted to £66,837 17s. 7½d.

At this time the maintenance of the poor was causing the authorities great trouble, and some practical measures were adopted on the subject. On March 6, the following report was published :—

Birmingham, February 29, 1780.—At a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town, held this Day, pursuant to a regular Notice thereof, The following Propositions were made and agreed to.

1st. That the Overseers of the Poor, for the Time being, be empowered to appoint two Collectors as their Assistants, whose particular Business shall be to collect the Levies, examine the Cases of the out Poor, and report the same from Time to Time to the Overseers.

2nd. That the Overseers be empowered to allow the Collectors a Salary of Fifty Guineas each per Annum.

3rd. That the Collectors do give to the Overseers good Security for the due and faithful Discharge of their duty, and the regular Payment of the Money they may collect.

4th. That it be recommended to the Overseers for the Time being to procure a New Set of Books ; distinguishing therein those Houses whose Inhabitants are excused paying the Levies, as Paupers, and those who are excused as being Non-Parishioners ; and likewise to make a Return of the Total Number of Houses, and the Annual Value of each.

5th. That a Committee be chosen to meet the Church-wardens and Overseers for the Time being, to take the above Return into Consideration and to deliberate whether it may be necessary to apply to Parliament or not ; and in Case it should be expedient to digest a Plan for that Purpose, laying the same, with their other proceedings, from Time to Time before a Town's Meeting.

A Committee was accordingly appointed.

On May 1 the committee published their report :—

Birmingham, 27th April, 1780.—The Committee appointed at a public Meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town, at the Office in Dale End, the 29th of February last, having heard Objections made to the Appointment of two Collectors or Assistants, as agreed on at said Meeting ; and apprehending the Duty expected from them is not sufficiently understood, think proper to lay the following more particular Sketch of it before the Public ; and appoint a general Meeting to reconsider the same, at the Office in Dale End, on Wednesday next, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon.

The Assistants are to collect the Levies, visit the Out Poor, look after Cases of Bastardy, which are become very numerous and burthensome; attend regularly at the Workhouse to make report to the Overseers; and to receive particular Directions from them, as to any Enquiries necessary to be made.

The Assistants are to make Remarks in their collecting Books; 1st. of all Persons not rated who are able to pay; 2nd. Persons rated who cannot pay thro' Poverty; 3rd. Persons not rated thro' Poverty; 4th. Persons not rated on account of their being Non-Parishioners, and of these they are to distinguish between such as are able to pay, and such as are not.—But the Assistants are not to have Power to assess, or excuse any Person who is assess'd, for these things must be done by the Overseers only.—The Overseers are to be accountable for all Monies received by the Assistants, and frequently go with them, to collect the Levies, that so they may be well acquainted with the Situation of the Town.

The Overseers are as usual to pay the Poor themselves, and not suffer the Assistants to do it, neither are the Assistants to buy Meat for the Workhouse, or interfere in the Management of the Family, the Intent and Meaning of their Appointment being to promote a more regular Collection of the Levies, and to prevent the many gross Impositions which the Overseers are liable to from the Out Poor.

The Committee beg leave to recommend the following as a Resolution proper to be adopted by the General Meeting. "That the Assistants shall not be continued in Office by the Overseers of next year, without a Special Order be made for this Purpose by a public Meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town."

In this month the town is honoured by the presence of a distinguished visitor.

Birmingham, Monday, May 22, 1780.—On Monday last arrived at the Swan Inn, in this Town, from Ireland, the Princess Dischkaw, of Russia, with her Son and Daughter, who after viewing the Soho, and the Manufactories of this Place, proceeded on their Way to London.

Here is a bit about the old militia :—

Birmingham, November 4, 1780.—Warwickshire Militia.—By Order of the Commanding Officer of the above Regiment of Militia. This is to inform the Men that are absent from the above Corps, whose Furlows are expired, or that have been lately enrolled, that did not join and march from Birmingham on Friday last, that they are to assemble on Friday next, November the 10th, at the White Horse, Moor-street, Birmingham, to receive Directions from Sergeant Pring, in Order to join the Regiment at Chelmsford, in Essex, or their Names will be inserted and they will be apprehended as Deserters.—Furlows Renewed not excepted.

N.B.—Wanted, Substitutes for the above Militia: Young Men of good Size and Figure, by applying to Sergeant Pring, at the White Horse, Moor-street, Birmingham, if approved of, will receive a good Bounty.

Trade questions were now exciting considerable attention. On October 9 was published a long letter from a correspondent signing himself Bristol, entitled "A Serious Address to the Merchants and

Manufacturers of Hardware, and particularly the Inhabitants of BIRMINGHAM and the adjacent Towns."* The gist of this letter is the urging on Birmingham men to make their own Brass. His appeal was followed by immediate action, as this advertisement shows :—

November 20, 1780.

To the Merchants and Manufacturers concerned in the Consumption of Metals, in the Town of Birmingham and Places adjacent.

Gentlemen,—You are earnestly requested to meet at the Hotel, in Temple Row, Birmingham, on Tuesday, the 28th of November, Instant, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, to deliberate upon a Plan, and to enter into a Subscription for forming a Company amongst Yourselves, for the making of Brass, &c., for your own Consumption; agreeable to the Design proposed to you by that Friend to your Trade who addressed you in this Paper of Monday the 9th of October; and thereby to relieve yourselves from the Imposition of a Set of mercenary Men, whose Machinations manifestly tend to the Injury of the Trade of your Town and Neighbourhood.

We anticipate a little in order to introduce the following advertisements referring to the same subject :—

January 29th, 1781.—To the Merchants and Manufacturers of Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, &c.

The Committee appointed by a Public Meeting of the Merchants and Manufacturers, held at the Hotel, on Tuesday, the 28th day of November last, for the Purpose of considering upon the Propriety of establishing A New Brass Work; having provided themselves with the necessary Information and Materials for that Purpose, do appoint another Public Meeting of the Merchants and Manufacturers, on Friday next, the Second of February, at the Hotel, Precisely at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon, in Order to lay before them the Results of their Proceedings.

Birmingham, Monday, February 5th, 1781.—On Friday, at a very large and respectable Meeting of the Principal Merchants and Manufacturers of this Town, respecting erecting a Brass Work, in order to relieve the Manufacturers from the uncertainty of the Price of Brass; from the Report of the Committee, a Subscription was then opened for that Purpose, and the Sum of Twenty Thousand Pounds subscribed to carry the Work into Execution.

Birmingham, April 2nd, 1781.—The Committee appointed for the Purpose of establishing a New Metal Company, hereby appoint a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the said Undertaking, on Wednesday, the 11th Day of this Instant April, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, at the Hotel, for the Purpose of signing the Articles of Partnership, when every Subscriber is requested to attend personally.

Hutton refers to this matter and tells us that "Public meetings were advertised, a committee was appointed, and subscriptions opened to fill two hundred shares of £100 each, which was deemed a sufficient

* The whole of this important address is quoted in Mr. W. C. Aitkin's able and exhaustive paper on "Brass and Brass Manufacturers," in "Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District."

capital; each proprietor of a share to purchase one ton of brass annually. Works were immediately erected on the banks of the canal, for the advantage of water carriage, and the whole was conducted with the true spirit of Birmingham freedom." These works have given a name to "Brass House Passage," and it may be added that the brass trade now gives employment to between 9,000 and 10,000 persons.

In 1780 public attention was called to the iron trade. On December 25, this letter appeared in the *Gazette* :—

For The Birmingham Gazette.—It is acknowledged by the most judicious Observers and Writers in the Kingdom, that the Iron Trade is inferior to none but the Woollen; the Welfare of it, therefore, may be pronounced of the utmost Consequence to these Kingdoms. The most important Branch of that Trade, both for Employment of Numbers and Consumption of Materials is the Making of Nails, which 'tis well known consumes more than Half the Iron made in Great Britain, besides a considerable Quantity supplied from Russia. An Invention having taken Place, of casting Nails, it is well worthy the Consideration of the Public, how far that important Branch of Manufacture may be effected thereby; for that Purpose let us trace what must be the unavoidable Consequences. The Sorts which the Nail-Casters principally make at present, are Sparrow Bills, Two-penny, and Three-penny Nails; which have been found by Experience so far useful, that many Persons, by their being rendered something lower, have been induced to buy and use them. This has occasioned a considerable Decrease in the Demand for wrought Nails, and these being the Sorts by which only Children are initiated into the Art of making Nails, a Stoppage in the Use of them will effectually disable the Master from taking such Kind of Labour from his Workmen; who will thereby be prevented from supporting and bringing up their children in the Nail Trade, and very ruinous Consequences will arise to that valuable Branch of Business. It becomes a Question worthy of attention;—Shall so great a Branch of our Manufactures be subverted by so partial an Innovation? Shall the Welfare of Forty Thousand useful Subjects be put in Competition with Forty? The Policy of all good States, Prudence and Humanity, forbid it. I will drop one Hint more before I conclude :—Should a Method be discovered of toughening Cast Iron, which, considering the increasing Light every Day thrown upon the Nature of Metals, may not be improbable, this would produce instant Destruction to the whole Nail Manufactory and other Branches of the Iron Trade, would considerably depopulate the Country, and reduce the Value of Landed Property. The Patent for Casting Nails is almost expired, several Persons are preparing to begin the Trade when that Time is elapsed; it is therefore well worthy the Consideration of the Makers and Manufacturers of Iron, that some Step may be taken to restrain or remove so alarming a Grievance, by Petition to Parliament.

A Friend to the Iron Trade.

Here is a mysterious bit of news of which we can learn nothing but what is conveyed in the advertisement.

June 18, 1781.—The INHABITANTS of this TOWN are requested to meet at the Public Office in Dale End, on TUESDAY next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, to consider

what is proper to be done respecting a Bill delivered for mending an ENGINE, &c., &c., to one of the late Churchwardens, which he thinks a very unreasonable one.

The condition of persons imprisoned for debt was very pitiable; and the benevolent were often called upon to relieve their distress. Charity sermons were frequently preached for this purpose; and we quote a record of one of these :—

August 27, 1781.—After a most excellent Sermon, preached by the Rev. Mr. Harrison, (in Behalf of the Society for the Relief and Discharge of Persons imprisoned for small Debts,) at the Churches of St. Martin and St. Philip, we have the Pleasure to acquaint the benevolent Public, the Collection at the former amounted to 40*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.* and at the latter to 47*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*—together amounting to the Sum of Eighty-seven Pounds Thirteen Shillings.

This is the reverse side of the picture :—

Monday, September 17, 1781.—We hear that a Subscription is going to be opened in this Town, for assisting Creditors in prosecuting Persons that refuse to pay their just Debts, several of whom have been to London to surrender themselves for that Purpose; thinking to take the Benefit of the insolvent Act, but were to their great Mortification disappointed.

The result of the efforts to put down Sunday trading are seen in the following extract :—

December 24, 1781.—On Thursday last thirty-eight Publicans paid the fine of ten Shillings each for allowing Tippling in their respective Houses on the Sabbath-Day, which, it is hoped will prove a sufficient caution to Publicans, Butchers, Barbers, Hucksters, &c. We hear the Officers of the Town are determined that the Laws shall be put in Execution against all Offenders.

We have now finished this record of the public life for another ten years. It displays an energy of action which is truly surprising. The number and variety of the public undertakings were very great—the charity of the people extensive and their public spirit remarkable. Few, if any, provincial towns could produce a more notable history than ours during this decade.

§ 3. EDUCATION AND LITERATURE.

With the increase of prosperity we naturally find an increase in the attention paid to literary subjects. The period from 1771 to 1781 is distinguished in this respect as well as for the great public undertakings which mark its history. The reader who is accustomed to hear old Birmingham spoken of as a town of ignorant people, whose artisans were only famous for making bad half-pence, flash notes, and lacquered

shams, will be surprised at the great mental activity which we shall show distinguished them at this time. Boulton and Watt were now perfecting those inventions which were destined to change the whole trading relations of the world; Hutton and Freeth were busy writing, the one his pleasant gossiping histories and personal narratives, the other his stirring songs upon every subject of general or of local interest. The Birmingham Library was founded, and at the end of this decade Dr. Priestley came to dignify the town by his wide learning, liberal spirit, and far-reaching scientific researches. In Education and literature, as in manufactures, volunteer movements, the introduction of new trades, and the intense interest manifested in public affairs, Birmingham made great and remarkable progress in the brief space of ten years. The number of books printed in the town during that time would form a considerable and not insignificant list. The extracts which we shall make will afford ample evidence of the truth of this estimate. Our first quotation gives the welcome intelligence of the formation of a new Book Society :—

February 10th, 1772.—*Book Society*.—A Subscription for Books and Pamphlets is now opened at Mr. Swinney's, Printer and Bookseller, (No. 76) in the High Street, where Books and Pamphlets are to be kept separate for the Use of the Subscribers only. Each Member to pay Five Shillings per Quarter. For further Particulars Gentlemen are referred to the printed Rules, which are calculated to prevent some of those Inconveniences and Expences to which other Societies are liable, and are ready to be delivered Gratis at Mr. Swinney's, where the Subscribers are requested to enter their Names.

N.B. A London News Paper every Day, will be kept at the above Place for the use of the Subscribers.

The next two refer to the Free Grammar School :—

Birmingham, June 8th, 1772. On Tuesday last French Grammatical Compositions were made at the Free School in this Town, in Presence of all the Masters, when after two elegant French Speeches delivered Extempore by Master J. Brailsford and C. Illingworth, with such an Eloquence, Gracefulness, and Command of Voice, uncommon to young Gentlemen, that astonished the Spectators; Premiums of Silver Medals were given by M. Wratislavia, French Master at the said School, to them and to the following Gentlemen, not less distinguished by their Performances, viz. W. Freer, T. Charter, N. Boden, W. Rhodes, T. Goodal, T. Clark, R. Charter, — Hammerlay, and — Banner.

May 31, 1773.—We have the Pleasure to assure the Public, that the French Orations spoken on Tuesday last by the Scholars at the Free Grammar School in this Town, were chiefly upon the Reign of King Edward the Sixth, Founder of the said School.

The local muse was not very prolific that year—that is always excepting John Freeth. In December, however, we find two short

poems in the *Gazette*, which as specimens of the taste of the time we quote :—

December 13, 1773.—To the Printer of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.—By giving the following Lines a place in your Paper, you will particularly oblige many of your Constant Readers.

ON TIME.

TIME flies so fast, no Mortal can it stay,
 Much less call back a Moment of a Day ;
 Of such a fleeting Nature 'tis, there's none
 Can say—'tis here—for while he speaks 'tis gone.
 Yet tho' it flies so fast, we surely may
 As 'twere recall it, using right the Day ;
 And as improved, our Bliss or Woe succeeds,
 We shall be judged according to our deeds.
 Oh ! precious Time, let no more run to Waste,
 There's no Amendment in the Grave to which we haste,
 And none can tell which Hour shall be their last.

December 20, 1773.—To the Printer of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.—By inserting the following Lines, on that awful subject Death, you may raise some pious Thoughts in the Minds of the most profligate, and will greatly oblige many of your constant Readers.

ON DEATH.

DEATH, to the virtuous Man
 Ends all his Troubles, Pain and Strife,
 And gives him Entrance
 To Joy and Everlasting Life.

But to the wicked Man,
 Death's Entrance of eternal Pains,
 Tho' here he long in Ease,
 And Pride, and sinful Pleasure reigns.

Sure they who thus believe,
 Will quickly leave their Sin,
 That they to lasting Joys
 May surely enter in.

And in doing our Duty present Pleasure we find,
 When those that transgress have great horror of Mind.

Debating Societies must be considered as educational institutions. They make men read and think, and any society which accomplishes these two important results must exercise a considerable influence on the mental character. In the year 1774 Birmingham produced two of these societies; the Free Debating Society, or as it was afterwards called, the Robin Hood Free Debating Society, and the Amicable Debating Society. The first met at a public house called the Red Lion, and a bit of more curious reading than the record of their doings

and the questions which they discussed, which are regularly advertised for some months, is rarely to be met with. There is no account of the formation of the Robin Hood Society, but we think the first notice we find of it indicates that the meeting reported was the first which was held for actual discussion. It appeared in April :—

Birmingham, April 4, 1774.—The Free Debating Society will meet next Friday Evening, in Sam. Wickins's Long Room, at the Red Lion Inn, to discuss the following Questions, viz.

1. "Can a Juryman, consistently with his Oath, find a Prisoner guilty without a Proof Positive?"

2. "Whether the Practice of Duelling is consistent either with true Courage or Christianity?"

3. "Whether Generosity in a Rich, or Gratitude in a Poor Man, is most amiable?"

4. "Whether is an arbitrary, or mixt Government, most eligible?"

Resolved, That the Pursuit of mild Measures respecting the Americans, will be most to the Interest of Great Britain.—Resolved, That the present Laws respecting Bastardy, are Destructive of Virtue.—Resolved, That compelling capital Offenders to hard Labour in the public Highways will be attended with more salutary Effects than the Punishment of Death.—Resolved, That the present high price of Grain and Provisions is owing to Luxury.—Resolved, That an ignorant man is a greater Object of Pity than a presumptive one.—The Company last Friday Evening was very numerous and respectable, and was pleased to give their Thanks to the President for his Conduct in the Chair.—The Debates will begin at half-past Seven o'Clock precisely.—Tickets Price 6d. each, to be had at the Bar of the Red Lion; and of the President, to whom all Letters or Questions for the Society are desired to be sent.

The next announcement appeared in the same month; and we are astonished at the number of questions discussed. How often did they meet? and how long was each speaker allowed to address the meeting? If they settled seven such questions in one night as are advertised on the 18th April they must have been model debaters :—

Birmingham, April 18th, 1774.—The Birmingham Robin Hood Free Debating Society will meet next Friday Evening, in Samuel Wickin's Long Room, at the Red Lion Inn, to discuss the following Questions, viz. :—

1. "Whether a Deist, consistent with the Moral Law, can be justified more than the Christian that does not live up to the Moral Law?"

2. "Which contributes most to make Mankind unhappy, Love, Avarice, or Ambition?"

3. "Whether is Suicide, or what we call Self-Murder, the Effect of Courage or Cowardice?"

4. "Whether Lenity or Severity in a Father, towards an undutiful Son, is the best means of bringing him back to his Duty?"

5. "Whether have the present Temptations of the Age more Influence over Man or Woman?"

6. "Are Women, who are led from the Paths of Virtue, by the Wiles of ill-meaning People, pitiable or despicable?"

7. "What constitutes Happiness?"

Resolved, That the present Combinations for prosecuting Felons will not be prejudicial to the Community in general.—Resolved, That the Power vested in Justices of the Peace is not contradictory to the Constitution of our Country, nor prejudicial to Individuals.—Resolved, that Greatness of mind is more conspicuous by Fortitude in Adversity than by Moderation in Prosperity.—Resolved, That it is necessary that Sales by Auction should be laid under certain Restrictions.—Resolved, That the present Mode of permitting Pawnbrokers is injurious to the trading Parts of the Kingdom. The Debates will begin at Half-past Seven o'Clock. Admittance 6d. each Gentleman.—J. JONES, President.

The postscript in the next week's advertisement indicates that the president had some trouble with his audience or his speakers, or with both. He says :—

A Plan is formed, which will be put into Execution, that cannot fail of preserving Order and Regularity, and notwithstanding the illiberal Attempts that have been made to suppress this Society, yet there is no Doubt to be made, as some respectable Persons have promised their Aid and Support, but it will soon become the first Society of the Kind in the Kingdom. Since able Speakers have promised to attend.

Was it the persons who made the "illiberal attempts" alluded to in this N.B. who founded the Amicable Debating Society? This cannot be clearly proved, but it may be inferentially inferred. On the same day that the above notice appeared the formation, origin, and objects of the Amicables were also announced. It will be seen that the early meetings of this new Society were held at a coffee-house.

Amicable Debating Society.—Birmingham, April 25, 1774.—At a Meeting, held on Wednesday Evening last, to consider of the Propriety and Expediency of establishing a Society in this Town, for the Encouragement of free and candid Disputation, it was the unanimous Sense of the Company, that such an Institution might, if conducted with Harmony and Decorum, be generally useful and agreeable; But, as the indiscriminate Admission of Persons into such Society, must cause the best Rules for its Government to be ineffectual; so must it consequently render its Duration precarious, and its Advantages very circumscribed. In order, therefore, to remove these Difficulties, a more liberal Plan has been adopted; a System of Laws has been formed, on the strict and regular Observance of which the Permanency and Reputation of this Society, immediately and ultimately depend. For, as the Power of making, without the Means of enforcing, a Law, would be absurd; so would it be equally ridiculous, in any Society, to establish Rules for the Maintenance of Peace and Good Order without a fixed Determination to enforce and obey them. It will therefore be expected and required of all Persons, who may hereafter be admitted Members of this Society, that they respectively subscribe their Names to such Rules as have been, or may be adopted, for the Support of this Institution. Copies of the Rules are left, for public Inspection at S. Aris's and Mr. Swinney's, Printers; to either of whom all Persons, who may be desirous of becoming members, are requested

to send their Names, sealed up and directed—To the President of the Amicable Debating Society. N.B. A previous Meeting will be held at the King's Head in New-Street, on Wednesday Evening next, precisely at Seven o'Clock, when such Persons, whose Names may have been received, will be ballotted for.

The first meeting of, and the questions to be discussed by, this new society appeared in the paper on the following Monday :—

May 2, 1774.—Amicable Debating Society.—This Society will meet on Friday next, at Mrs. Ashton's Coffee Room in the Cherry Orchard, Birmingham, when the following Questions are to be discussed :—

1. "Is a Drunkard the greater Enemy to himself or to Society?"
2. "Which is most detestable in itself and most dangerous to Mankind, Treachery in Friendship or Hypocrisy in Religion?"

3. "Which are the greatest real or imaginary Evils?"

The President will take the Chair precisely at 8 o'clock.

N.B. As the Questions for Debate will not be advertised in future, they will be left for public Inspection at the Bar of the above mentioned House, where the Society is intended to be held.

Our friends of the Robin Hood were not to be intimidated by the unmistakable allusions to them, made by the Amicables, and on the same 2nd of May they advertised as follows :—

Birmingham, May 2, 1774.—The Birmingham Robin Hood Free Debating Society will meet next Friday Evening, in Samuel Wickens's Long Room, at the Red Lion Inn, in this Town, to discuss the following Questions, viz. :—

1. "What is true Generosity?"
2. "Is it possible for a Man who is born blind to have any true Idea of Sight?"
3. "Is not the Practice of State Lotteries prejudicial to a Commercial Country?"
4. "Does not the Liberty that is allowed Ballad Singers tend to corrupt the Morals of the lower Class of People?"
5. "Is not the sending so many Transports to America very detrimental to the Trade of this Nation?"
6. "Which is guilty of the greatest Crime, the Servant that robs his Master secretly, or the Thief that audaciously breaks into his House!"
7. "Is the Custom so much practised (in Birmingham) of sending Children to the Shops to work as soon as they are well able to walk, injurious or advantageous to the Inhabitants in general?"
8. "Who may, with the strictest Propriety, be called wise Men?"

Resolved, That Mr. Wilkes is a very proper Person to sit in Parliament.—Resolved, That Colonel Luttrell has no legal Right to sit in the House of Commons.—Resolved, That the Act of Parliament lately passed respecting the Bostonians is not founded upon the Principles of Justice or Equity.—Resolved, that the Inconstancy of the Fair Sex, originally arises from the Men, and not from themselves.—Resolved, That as this Society is intended to be of general Advantage that such Ladies who choose to hear the Debates shall be admitted.—The President therefore gives Notice that the Upper Part of the Room will be railed in for the Reception of Ladies, that they may sit without Inter-

ruption, but no Gentleman is to be permitted to sit within Side the Rail.—The Ladies will be admitted without Expense.—Admittance 6d. each Gentleman.—The President will take the Chair exactly at Eight o'Clock.

J. JONES, President.

N.B. The President gives Notice that the Wolverhampton Free Debating Society will meet next Thursday Evening in the Assembly Room at the Red Lion Inn, in that Town. The Questions and Resolutions are delivered in Hand Bills.

The Robin Hood however did a bold thing. To both societies ladies were admitted; but what shall we say to this announcement, which appeared on June 6? Did not our liberal Robins anticipate John Stuart Mill, on the woman's rights question, and settle it for themselves? We wonder if any ladies availed themselves of the permission, and if so, what was the length of the speeches which they made? Who was, and what has become of Mr. John Scott, the able orator, whose abilities were recognised by the presentation of a silver medal? But we quote the notice:—

June 6, 1774.—Ladies will be allowed to speak to any of the above Questions. The Debates will begin at Eight o'Clock, and conclude at a Quarter past Ten. Admittance Six-pence each Gentleman; the Ladies without Expense. A Silver Medal was adjudged to Mr. John Scott, for his abilities as an Orator and able Speaker. The Resolutions of Friday Night will be published in Thursday's Paper. Ladies' Tickets to be had of Mrs. Wickens, at the Red Lion Inn, and of the President.

Would our readers like to be present at one of these old debates? Fortunately we can introduce them, for a curious stranger who was present at one of the meetings has left us a graphic account of the proceedings. It appeared in a letter to the printer on June 20, 1774:—

To the Printer of the *Birmingham Gazette*.—If a Stranger's Sentiments on the Debating Society are deemed worthy of Admittance in your useful Paper, the following are at your service. Having a vacant Hour I attended at the Society held at the Red Lion, and, strange to think, the Effect of Pain and Pleasure never perhaps in such quick Transitions possessed the frame of Man. An Institution of this Nature, conducted with proper Decorum, is truly rational. What are the principles of this decorum? Observance of Rules and Ability in the Speakers. The former, Method and common Sense can conceive as well as execute; the latter, only Genius and Education can supply. The Remark has been often made that the Ridiculous in the Extreme, pleases the Mind as much as the Extreme good Sense; it may cause a laugh in others, but in me, it always produces a Pang. I feel for a Person who makes himself ridiculous more than probably the Object does for himself, and I ever enjoy the deserved Applause given to the sensible Candidate for Fame. Thus, Mr. Printer, these quick Transitions of Pain and Pleasure were caused. A Question is proposed, up starts a poor Mechanic, or an Apprentice Boy, and commences Orator. Nature is certainly the primary principle of Oratory, and if you

will Pardon a Pun, many of them must be truly Orators, being truly Naturals; thus my Pain is produced. Soon after, a judicious Person discusses the Point, then succeeds my Pleasure; but unfortunately for me, the latter Instances were but few; a young Gentleman of the Law gave me indeed particular satisfaction; a bad cause requires an able Pleader; was I to be tried for a Crime I should certainly be acquitted, provided I had a Fee to employ him. These, Mr. Printer, are a few scattered sentiments; hereafter, perhaps, you may have more, but, pray, through the Channel of your Paper, whisper the would-be Orators of that Assembly to be more attentive and less vociferous. That Nature is the first principle in the Composition of an Orator is an undoubted Fact; assistive Art is a secondary Cause as requisite in his Formation; what is this Art? A refined Education. How is it possible a Poor Apprentice or a mean Mechanic can possess it? Besides the outward Garb of many of those who spoke was rather indecent; a clean Shirt and Stock should surely be procured for this night, even though Sunday went unprovided; the Ladies are permitted Gratis, and Cleanliness is a Compliment due to the Sex every where. Milton beautifully describes the external appearance of an Orator.

“ Deep on his Front engraven
 “ Deliberation sits, and Public Care;
 “ His Look draws Audience and attention—still as night
 “ Or Summer’s Noon-tide Air, while e’er he speaks.”

I shall conclude this with a parody on the above and leave it to the judicious Readers whether it is not perfectly suited to some of the Orators of the Robin Hood Free Debating Society.

Dull on their unshaved Chins and dirty Brows,
 Stupidity resides, and vacant Thought;
 Their Looks caused Laughter, while Contempt and Shame,
 Loud as when Ignorance made deadly drunk,
 While e’er they speak.

ALPHA.

P.S. As Decorum is well preserved, much Honour is due to the President, who in every Respect seems worthy of this Office; nothing remains wanting but able Speakers in the Society; and though Timidity is ever the attendant of real Merit, yet it is to be wished that some other Gentlemen will follow the young Lawyer’s Example; on such a Scheme as this Oratory will again flourish, nor can the Mind of Man conceive a more effectual Plan for the encouragement of Elocution.

On Monday next will be published, Price 3d., in 4to, the Robin Hood Orators, a Satyric Poem. Inscribed to the President. Sold by the Printer of this Paper, and may be had of the Men who carry it.

We can learn nothing of this Satyric Poem. The most careful inquiries to obtain a copy have been ineffectual. In July the Robin Hoods cease to hold their meetings at the Red Lion and remove to the great room, late Hopkins’, near Temple Row. The two societies continue to advertise their existence and debates for a few months longer and then silently disappear from History. On January 9, 1775, these verses appeared:—

Extempore Verses on seeing the curious Model of a Crucifix at No. 18, in Colmore Row, done by Mr. Hancocks.

Hail wondrous Man ! by envied Honours graced,
 By Genius polished, and by taste confest ;
 How shall I praise thy animating Worth,
 That forms Redemption for a ransomed Earth ?
 Lo ! Thy Redeemer to the World appears,
 Breathing by Thee, yet breathless by thy Spears ;
 Wounds ! glorious Wounds ! that dignify the Cross,
 And Hope shall mourn, and gladden at the Loss.
 Ingenious Hancocks—zealously expert ;
 When Precept fails, thy Model shall convert ;
 Envy shall die, if living Art bequeath
 Such lasting Legacies of Life and Death.
 If thy fam'd Model forms a Change within,
 Of Guilt discovered, and detested Sin—
 Be thine—Oh, Jesu ! Thine the heavenly Part,
 To place thy deathless Image near my Heart.

On October 23 an announcement was made that Mr. Walker, “Author of the Rhyming Dictionary, and General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary, intends reading Lectures on English Pronunciation and the Beauties of Shakspeare in this Town, some Time next week.” On November 6 the following advertisement was published :—

Prospectus of a Course of Lectures on English Pronunciation, in which will be an attempt to vestigate the Principals of the Language, to shew Rules for Pronouncing with Precision and Certainty, and to point out Methods for speaking and reading in Public with Justness, Energy, and Ease. The Precepts will be illustrated by a Display of the Sublime and Beautiful in English Composition, particularly by a Comparative view of the Beauties of Shakspeare contrasted with similar Passages from Milton, Dryden, Pope, Otway, Young, Addison, Akenside, &c.—Frequent examples will be given of the False Sublime, and those on which good and bad writing depend will be occasionally pointed out and applied, The whole calculated to form a Taste for what is excellent in every species of Composition. By J. Walker, Author of the Rhyming Dictionary and General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary.

The Course consisting of Six Lectures will be Half a Guinea to Subscribers. A Single Lecture to Non-Subscribers Two Shillings. To begin this Day, the 6th of November, at the Hotel, and to be continued every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, till finished. —Tickets for the whole Course or a single Lecture, to be had of Pearson and Rollason, Printers and Booksellers, and of Mr. Swinney, Birmingham.

N.B. Mr. Walker begs leave to assure the Public that his Lecture will begin punctually at Seven o’Clock.

Was the fact recorded below so uncommon at this time that it need be celebrated in verse ?

On Seeing a LADY nursing her own CHILD.

Did you, ye Fair, behold this pleasing Sight,
 You'd feel your Bosoms glow with sweet Delight :
 Your tender Breasts would catch the gentle Flame,
 And all would wish to be yon happy Dame.
 Your Routs and Balls would seem delusive Toys,
 And, vanquish'd, yield to her domestic joys :
 No wanton passion in her Breast remains,
 But o'er each Thought and Action—Virtue reigns :
 No thirst of Dress, which oft attends the Fair ;
 The new-born Babe demands her only care.
 To that alone her every wish extends,
 And for it's Safety oft to Heaven she bends.
 If gentle Sleep its tender Eye-lids close,
 She ever watchful guards its soft repose :
 Maternal Transports fill her glowing Breast,
 And each fond smile proclaims her truly blest.

Birmingham, Sept. 16, 1766.

J. C.

Science was not neglected. The following announcement of a course of lectures on air appeared November 4, 1776 :—

New Experiments upon Air.

It is proposed to open a third Course of EXPERIMENTS UPON DIFFERENT KINDS OF AIR, This Evening the 4th Inst. exactly at Six o'Clock, at the HOTEL, upon the same plan as the two preceding Courses, and as given lately at Bath and Bristol. These Lectures and Experiments include the greatest Discoveries that have been made during the present Century ; and from the great Variety they contain, are of undoubted Importance to Persons of every Rank and Profession.—Subscribers only admitted, who pay Ten Shillings and Six-pence for Four Lectures.—This is intended to be the last Course on the above Plan ; but an extensive Course of Chemistry, which it is presumed will be considered of great Importance to Birmingham and the Neighbourhood, will be proposed at a future Time.

The next refers to the teaching of modern languages in the Free Grammar School :—

FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

New-Street, Birmingham, February 3, 1777.—At this School the French and German Languages are taught grammatically every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Likewise Instruction given in the above-mentioned Languages in the Evening to those whose Business will not permit their attending during the Day.—Terms, for French, One Guinea Entrance, and One per Quarter ; and German One Pound Ten Shillings per Quarter.—Further Particulars may be known by directing a Line Post paid, to Mr. Wratislavia, at the School.

On May 19 was advertised the following book :—

On Thursday May 22nd will be published (Price only ONE SHILLING) The Chronicles of the Kings of England, from the Norman Conquest unto the present Day. Written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians. By NATHAN BEN SADDI, a Priest of the Jews.

Printed and Sold by T. Chapman, No. 15, Mount Pleasant; Pearson and Rollason, Mr. Swinney, Mr. Belcher, Booksellers; and by the Newsmen.

This is a reprint of the famous Parody by R. Dodsley, published in 1740. The work is now exceedingly rare. It is written in the style of the Bible. The author was evidently a very liberal man, endowed with a keen wit, and a power of irony which is rather increased than weakened by his style. One or two brief extracts from this book will afford the reader an idea of the character and method of Nathan Ben Saggi. Here is a passage from the reign of Richard the Second :—“And Richard the King made unto himself idols, as Edward the Second, his predecessor, had done : and the thing which he did displeased the people, and they took the crown from off his head, and put it on the Head of Henry Duke of Lancaster, the son of John of Gaunt.” Of the youthful Edward VI., he writes :—“Howbeit he was cut off as a flower in its bud, or as a rose in the morning sun ; his days also were as a span, and the years of his reign as a shadow that passeth away ; but his memory smelleth sweet for ever.” Of Mary, he tells : “The vengeance of the Lord overtook her, and she was torn from the face of the earth as a bramble that choaketh the field, and her name is an abomination.” His allusion to the great Queen Elizabeth is in a different vein. The book is so rare, the account of her reign so brief and yet so graphic, so quaint and yet so true, that we have much pleasure in reproducing it for the gratification of our readers. This is his record of her long and noble rule :—

“Now Elizabeth was twenty and five years old when she began to reign, and she reigned over England forty and four years, four months, and seven days, and her mother’s name was Anna Bullen.

“And she was endowed with wisdom from above, and the spirit of the Almighty gave her understanding ; she chose unto herself wise and able ministers ; she hearkened unto their counsels, and she governed her kingdom with power and great glory.

“The sea also was subject unto her, and she reigned on the ocean with a mighty hand.

“Her admirals compassed the world about, and brought her home treasures from the uttermost parts of the earth.

"The glory of England she advanced to its height, and all the princes of the earth sought her love; her love was fixed on the happiness of her people, and would not be divided.

"The æra of learning was also in her reign, and the genius of wit shone bright in the land.

"Spenser and Shakspeare, Verulam and Sidney, Raleigh and Drake adorned her court, and made her reign immortal.

"And woe unto you, Spaniards; woe unto you, ye haughty usurpers of the American seas; for at the lighting of her eyes ye were destroyed, and at the breath of her mouth ye were scattered abroad; she came upon your *Armada* as a whirlwind, and as a tempest of thunder she overwhelmed you in the sea.

"Wisdom and strength were in her right hand, and in her left were glory and wealth.

"She spake and it was war; she waved her hand and the nations dwelt in peace.

"Her ministers were just, her counsellors sage; her captains were bold, *and her maids of honour ate beef-steaks for breakfast.*

"Now the rest of the acts of Queen Elizabeth, and all the glorious things that she did, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the Kings of England?

"And Elizabeth slept with her fathers, and she was a virgin.* * *

"And she was buried in the chapel of King Henry the Seventh, and James of Scotland reigned in her stead."

This we take is a truer estimate of the great queen than many of those given by the so called philosophical historians. The old chronicler was not so kind to her successor. His first sentences of the reign of James I. are: "And Jamie thought himself a bonny king, and a mickle wise mon. Howbeit he was a fool and a pedant." After narrating the story of this shameful reign, the witty old annalist says: "Now the rest of the acts of King James, and his wisdom, and his learning, and all the books that he wrote, behold thou mayest find them in the chandlers' shops unto this day." These specimens will suffice to show what kind of a man was living and writing in our midst in 1777. We must, however, quote a few words he says about our first great

poet. They occur, of course, in his record of the reign of Edward the Third. "In these days," he says, "lived thilk grete poet, hight Geoffery Chaucere, the fader of Inglish poesie, whose workis ben ritten in rime, and imprinted in a boke, ycleped the workis of maister Geoffery Chaucere; and he smothed the tongue of his countrie, and his fame is waxen grete in the land."

Music was also cultivated, and on December 15 this advertisement was published:—

December 15th, 1777.—New Music.—Proposals for Publishing by Subscription Six Sonata's for the Harpsichord, or Piano Forte, with Accompaniments for Violins and Violoncello. Composed by Jeremiah Clark,* Organist, in Birmingham.

The following epigram records a public event:—

August 10, 1778.

EPIGRAM,

On the Old Cross being Iron-barred.
Where Conscience keeps her weekly Court,
The Burthen grew so great,
The Pillars prov'd a weak Support,
For such a pond'rous Weight.
Now Iron-bound it wears a Face,
(Think not the Term deriding)
More like a Prison—than a Place
For Justice to preside in.

Early in the next year we have the following ambitious attempt at a blank verse poem. It is not a bad specimen of the local poetry of the period.

February 7, 1780.

ON THE BIRMINGHAM INFIRMARY.

"Since to the least of these my breth'ren poor
The boon is giv'n, you've giv'n it unto me."
Thus spake the Benefactor of Mankind,
Whose sacred lips no words did e'er escape
But mental and corporeal woe fled swift
Abash'd, confounded at the godlike sound.
From his celestial cup of joy, one drop
Gives highest zest to the mixt bowl of life
Nay more, it almost deifies mankind.
Absorb'd in contemplation, silence deep
Had thrown her peaceful mantle o'er me, when
The mis'ries of mankind in hurrying crowds

* Mr. Timmins has a copy of Ten Songs by the same Composer, which were published in 1791, with artistic Title Page by Moses Haughton, dedicated to the Marchioness of Donegall. This volume is called "Op. iv;" so that Jeremiah Clark must have been an industrious composer.

Rush'd on my mind and urged the deep'ned sigh :
 When, lo ! a cloud in distant view appear'd,
 Fring'd with ætherial splendour, vivid hue ;
 Such the gay rainbow, when it darts its rays,
 After a black, fear-fraught, bellying cloud,
 Full gorg'd with thunder's wild, tremendous roar,
 And red hot lightning's streaky glare, almost
 Had fix'd to marble the astonish'd mind,
 And sooth'd to scenes of peace the dubious soul.

The car approach'd : on it triumphant rode
 A form cherubic ; its celestial charms
 Display'd a radiance, whose lustre mild
 With awful, pleasing, rev'rence struck the soul.
 A dignity of aspect grac'd her form,
 And on her cheeks, play'd dimpling, love divine :
 With gentle air her robe ætherial wav'd :
 The whole proclaim'd an origin divine,
 Best emanation of the Deity ;
 Known here below, (but ah ! how seldom known ?)
 As in the world above, of grace's queen,
 The soft, the tender, meek-ey'd charity.
 Nearer approaching, beck'ning with her hand,
 That hand which oft had consolation's balm
 Diffusely poured into the wounded mind ;
 She bid me follow. With her mild behest
 Obedient I compli'd—she led me where
 A venerable pile op'd to my view,
 Displaying grandeur, elegance and use :
 She stopp'd ; and with the dignity of love,
 Heaven in her eye, with sweetest accents spake.
 “ Behold this fair Asylum ! here, of late,
 “ Where this majestic pile now rears its head,
 “ The ox laborious nature's common rang'd
 “ And with her bounty, satiate, here he rais'd
 “ His honest front, with gratitude inspir'd
 “ To' him, the universal parent, kind.
 “ 'Twas here, with artless, native innocence,
 “ The guileless sheep the verdurous herbage cropt,
 “ And play'd his sportful gambols : here prepar'd
 “ His fleecy robe in nature's gen'rous lawn
 “ To cloathe his lord : nay more, ah tearful thought !
 “ Complaintless lay to the unfeeling knife,
 “ And bled out life for the support of man.
 “ Thus heav'n provides for all—but if, O ! man,
 “ Thy dubious mind still wanders in the steps
 “ By Providence imprinted here below ;
 “ Remember the grand drama—act thy part—

" To act it well be studious—and when
 " The final scene is closed, then you'll behold
 " The plot unravel'd quite—then you'll adore—
 " To wonder now is the frail lot of man.
 " Nature is fraught with wonders, claim not then
 " Exemption from the lot of thine own being.
 " The soil now cover'd by this rev'rend pile,
 " To nobler purpose destin'd, its broad front
 " Spreads to invite, and leaves its doors unlatch'd
 " T' embrace the pilgrim whose unhappy fate
 " The cup of humane woe it is to drink.
 " Inspir'd by me, my faithful vot'ries gave
 " (As grateful stewards) of the loan assign'd
 " By heaven to them—from thence a structure fair
 " Thus rears its head, to speak its founder's praise.
 " Within those walls sickness and pain retreat
 " To lave in this Bethesda, when they drop
 " Their each distress and bless the healing hand.
 " Sour bigotry, that fiend accurs'd, beholds,
 " With rageful eye askaunt, this sacred fane ;
 " For here my votaries, impartial, free
 " From every aim but pure benevolence,
 " Like me know no distinction of distress :
 " Samaria's sons, or Judah's swarthy race,
 " Christian, or Painim, whisp'ring their complaints
 " The balm and oil here find for every wound.
 " Speak ye ! who've thrown aside your crutches here,
 " Whose various disease hath rapid fled
 " At the kind soothing hand which made you whole ;
 " Oh ! speak the grateful feelings of your souls
 " For rescue from your complicated woes :
 " But ne'er forget the homage due to him,
 " That best of beings, who gives the pow'r to heal
 " Within, Economy, my handmaid reigns ;
 " Neatness she there diffuses, there assigns
 " To each their duteous charge ; pain and disease,
 " Who late the humble cottage haunted dire,
 " And here for shelt'ring aid the lazar drove,
 " Tremble abashed ; he with the different scene
 " Obtains, at entrance, almost half his cure.
 " Thou blest Asylum ! my peculiar care !
 " On thy broad base here still remain unhurt
 " By time's devouring teeth—let it be mine
 " To inhabit still my present vot'ries hearts,
 " And other souls inspire : and at the close,
 " When nature's self in final ruin crush'd,
 " And every grace which dignifies mankind

" Their being cease, I and my faithful friends
 " In worlds shall still exist, where time nor woe
 " E'er dar'd to tread the mansions of my God.
 " And thou, who, thus obedient to my call,
 " Hast followed to this prospect of delight,
 " And list'ned to my lore ! hence, now depart,
 " And likewise do, as I your guide, have taught.
 " Protectress of this fane, I'll here abide,
 " And point distress to where relief attends."
 Thus spake the Cherub mild ; and I awoke
 From contemplation's visionary scene.

The next extract will be considered, by every Birmingham man, one of considerable interest and importance. It is the proposal for the publication of our first history—a history which, notwithstanding its shortcomings, its errors of omission and commission, is still a book to which we all turn with delight, and ought to speak of with respect. Hutton's works are so well known, and he has written his own life so fully that we need not enlarge upon so fruitful a theme in these pages. It will be seen that in the first advertisement the work is announced as by a "gentleman, an inhabitant." It is as follows :—

March 5th, 1781.—Proposals for publishing by Subscription, In One Volume, Octavo, Price 7s. 6d., The History of Birmingham, From the earliest Accounts down to the present time. Which will be enriched with 24 Copper-Plates, representing the Public Buildings, a View and Plan of the Town, &c., &c. By a Gentleman, an Inhabitant.

Next week the same advertisement appears again, with the addition that the work is announced to be by W. Hutton. On October 29, this notice appeared :—

To the Public.—The Publication of the History of Birmingham is obliged to be postponed till the Beginning of December next, as some of the principal Plates, which are engraving by that eminent Artist Mr. WALKER of London, cannot possibly be finished before that Period. The Subscription will continue open till that Time, and then finally Close. The great Expense incurred by the Number of Copper Plates given in the Work, will unavoidably oblige the Author considerably to advance the Price to Non-subscribers. It will contain Seventeen Copper-plates, some of which will be well worth 2s. 6d. each. Price to Subscribers 7s. 6d.

The book was published in December as promised. On March 19 Mr. Walker commenced a course of twelve Philosophical Lectures with the necessary experiments, in the large room at the Coffee House in Cherry Street. Mr. Walker's first course of lectures seem to have been popular, for on August 13 we read :—

August 13, 1781.—At the Request of many respectable Families in Birmingham, MR. WALKER is induced to open a Second COURSE of PHILOSOPHICAL LECTURES, in about a Fortnight, on the same Terms as the present Course, which is now reading at Six every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Evenings, at the Old ASSEMBLY ROOMS in the SQUARE, where 'tis requested those Ladies and Gentlemen who chuse to partake of the present or next Course, will be so good as to leave their Names.

This course commenced on November 5, on which day this advertisement was published :—

Mr. Walker's Astronomical Lecture on the EIDOURANION, or Transparent Orrery, Will begin at Seven This Evening, and at the same Hour on Wednesday and Friday next (and no longer) at the New Theatre, Birmingham, THE EIDOURANION *exhibits*.

1st. The Ptolomaic System of the Universe in Transparency.—2dly. That Part of the Copernican System which relates to the Sun's Motion on his Axis. The Earth's Motions, both annual and diurnal ; shewing thereby, how Day and Night, long and short Days, the Seasons, &c., are produced : so evident and like Nature, that a bare inspection of the Machine, and a Quarter of an Hour's attention, may give the most Ignorant a clear Idea of these Phenomena.—3dly. The Motion and Phases of the Moon ; with Eclipses of both Sun and Moon.—4thly. The Earth and Moon's Motion round the common Centre of Gravity ; and how Spring and Neap Tides are produced.—5thly. A Transit of Venus.—6thly. A Grand Display of the whole Solar System, viz., the Sun, Mercury, Venus, the Earth and Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and their Satellites, all in motion without any visible Machinery ; Together with the Parabolic Descent and Ascent of a Comet.

A correspondent furnishes us with this report of the scientific apparatus used by Mr. Walker in these Lectures :—

November 12, 1781.—To the Printer.—I am always made happy by finding a liberal Spirit amongst men of Science and Ingenuity ; for why should not the *Maker* of a Machine be encouraged as well as the *Contriver* ! How many useful Inventions would die in embryo, if there were not ingenious Mechanics to work them into execution ? What signifies the projects of contemplative Men, if the Hammer and the Lathe were not skilfully employed to call their ideas into actual existence ? Would Birmingham ever have risen to its present superiority over all the manufactories in its Way on the Face of the whole Globe, if the Contrivances of ingenious men had not met with Hands ready and prompt to execute them ? Happy feat of Arts and ingenuity ! Where the Head and Hands work so cordially together ! Had it not been for this, the Eidouranion, with other Projects, had died in the Head of the Contriver ; and its simple, but sublime Instructions would have been lost to the Public. I am led into these Recollections, by hearing that the ingenious Mr. William Allen of this Town, the Contriver and Maker of the best Electrical Machines ever constructed, is to have a Benefit at the New Theatre this Evening, for having so happily executed the Eidouranion, on which, I am sorry to hear, Mr. Walker, the Inventor means to give his *last* lecture at this time in Birmingham. I am, Sir, Your Constant Reader,

HCEAMPHELIUS.

During this period Mr. Edward Nicklin published four volumes of a work under the title of the " Trifler ; or a Ramble among the Wilds of

Fancy, the Works of Nature, and the Manners of Men." This work is now very scarce. This is not a subject for regret as it is utterly worthless. The author had a rather elevated idea of his own abilities, for he charges five shillings a volume for his very thin book; each volume could be read in less than half an hour, and ill repays the reader for that small space of time. Portions of the work read like the productions of a lunatic, and not of an inspired lunatic. One short, very short, extract may be given as a sample of Mr. Nicklin's power, or rather weakness. After writing of the divisions of a day and its meals, he continues "These words, like the pulsations of the heart, beat as regular as a clock, except in those variations which are discernable in both.—Now in the lazy they are slow—and sure—(breakfast—dinner—supper—and bed). In the miserable they are at unequal distances, and are doubtful—(breakfast—dinner—supper—&c). But in the busy and the merry, they are as quick as thought (breakfast, dinner, supper—breakfast, dinner, supper—breakfast, dinner, supper).—O there is hardly room for bed to creep in at any rate!—except now and then, by way of amusement, or so." We regret to have to say it of a local work, but with the greatest desire to say a good word, for this early specimen of Birmingham literature we have found it impossible. To his other faults Mr. Nicklin adds that of indelicacy, and his attempts at wit are about equal to his attempts at fine writing, and both are as bad as bad can be. After a bit of lugubrious reflection he concludes one of his volumes with this sentence, "God bless me! this looks so much like a dying speech, I don't half like it." We are afraid that his readers would have liked it better had it been the dying speech of Mr. Nicklin himself.

We need not enumerate all the books published in this or any of the decades of the hundred years to which our labours are confined. It will, however, be evident from the examples given, that literature and science were not neglected, nor held in such small esteem as is generally supposed, by the inhabitants of this town. The record given shows that there was considerable literary activity in the "hardware village" at this date, and that we were not quite the outer barbarians which it has been the fashion to represent us. Birmingham was moving onward and upward mentally as well as materially, and as our

wealth and prosperity increased, the refining and elevating influences of life kept company with our more palpable and perceptible progress in trade and industry.

§ 4. AMUSEMENTS.

In the separate chapter, on the first attempt to obtain a license for the Theatre we have dwelt so fully on the theatrical life of the town during these ten years that the present section is materially diminished. Several encouraging facts are met with which show that a great improvement was slowly taking place in the tastes of the people. A feeling was rising against cocking and bull-baiting, and other brutal sports; and flower shows and bell-ringing were coming into fashion. All these signs of a change for the better will be welcomed by all who desire that the recreation of the people should be harmless and healthy. It took many years to destroy the depraved tastes which all classes displayed in their games and sports; but we rejoice to see indications that such a change was now taking place in this very important part of the life of a nation; and we shall carefully note every fact which illustrates the growth of a desire for a better class of amusements.


The year 1772 opened with the arrival of a once celebrated man. On January 6, we read this advertisement:—

SUM SOLUS.

Just arrived in this town from London, the wonderful Fire Eater, Mr. Powell.—His Performances astonish the most curious and learned Spectator; nor can the greatest Philosopher, or the most exalted Genius, account for this surprising Phenomenon in Nature.

The Astley family were performing here this year, and the next extract is the announcement of their last appearance:—

December 21, 1772.—The celebrated Mr. and Mrs. Astley, with their Son, 5 Years old, will exhibit for the last Time, THIS DAY, at Eleven o'clock, in a large Field at the Navigation Coffee House.—Note, Their Feats of Horsemanship on one, two, three, and four HORSES, are really astonishing, and never exhibited but by themselves. Mrs. Astley will exhibit in the same manner as she did before their Majesties of England and France, being the last Time of exhibiting in this Town.

 As the Weather has been so unfavourable, should this Day prove wet, the Exhibition will be deferred till the first fair Day.—The Time of Performance may be known by Mr. Astley's Pupils parading, which will be a Signal of performing

immediately.—The Foot Road by the Cottage of Content is repaired on Purpose for those that pass that Way.

Living campanologians will read the next few quotations with pleasure :—

August 23, 1773.—On Tuesday last was rung at St. Philip's Church, by the Society of St. Martin's Youths in this Town, a complete Peal of 5040 Grandsire Catons, in three Hours and seven Minutes. It is allowed to be as musical a Peal as any ever composed, and the first ever rung on these Bells, which weigh 9 Ton, 10 C. 22 lb.

November 1st, 1773.—On Monday Morning was rung at St. Philip's Church, in three Hours and fifty Minutes, a complete Peal of 6,426 Grandsire Catons, by the Society of St. Martin's Youths of this Town. The weight of the Tenor is thirty Hundred ; it is allowed to be as musical a Peal as ever was composed, and the most Changes ever rung in this Town before or within 60 Miles of this Place.

July 22nd, 1776.—On Monday last the New Peal of Eight Bells at Aston, were opened with Holt's celebrated Peal of 5,040 Grandsire Trebles, in three Hours and four Minutes, by the St. Martin's Youths of this Town.—The above Bells were cast by Messrs. Pack and Chapman, and hung by Mr. Samuel Turner, all of London, and gave universal Satisfaction to the Company assembled on the Occasion.

August 5, 1776.—On Monday last, at Deritend Chapel, *near this Town*, was opened a new Peal of eight Bells ; and on Tuesday was rung by the St. Martin's Youths, in three Hours and five Minutes, a complete Peal of 5,040 Bob Majors.—The above Bells were cast by Mr. Robert Wells of Aldbourne, in Wiltshire, and are pronounced by Judges (for their Weight of Metal) to be as musical a Peal as any in the Kingdom.

On August 8, 1774, an epilogue by John Freeth was published.—The reader will see that the poet had an eye to business, and makes his verses serve the double purpose of an epilogue and an advertisement :—

Epilogue written by Mr. Freeth for his Benefit, and spoken on Wednesday Evening last, by Mr. Penn, with great Judgment and Propriety to a very crowded and respectable Audience at the New Theatre in this Town.

In times of old it often has been said,
The best of Authors scarce could earn their bread ;
And still we find in these our modern Days,
Poor as a Poet—is a Common Phrase.
Not long ago, a Bard, in needy Plight,
To soothe his Cares, and set his Matters right,
Thinking this House would give him some relief,
Made application to our Vet'ran Chief.
Indulg'd in this particular Request,
'Twas then his Duty to perform his best.
The Night comes on—his best of Friends appear,
But wonder not, if some discover Fear ;
For many were the Expectations warm,
To see the Poet—in the Actor's Form.

When question'd why he seem'd afraid to tread
 The dang'rous Stage his pressing Cause to plead :
 His Answer was—'Tho' bred upon the Ground
 Where Freedom reigns, and Orators abound ;
 That notwithstanding the expedient Rules,
 Weekly laid down in Free Debating Schools,
 'Twas past his Skill to reach the graceful Art
 Of Speech and Action—Pleasure to impart ;
 Therefore as Proxy, pardon the Address,
 I come—his Thanks most humbly to express.
 In such Concerns were fondest hopes succeed,
 The grateful Heart can ne'er forget the Deed ;
 But while to you respectfully he bends,
 To you—his Patrons, Benefactors, Friends ;
 Words ill express the Gratitude he owes
 To him from whom this bounteous Favour flows.—
 Oft' has it been remark'd in Life's round Sphere,
 That common Bards keep Lent throughout the year.
 Such Observations are not always true,
 This Night's Appearance the Reverse will shew,
 The Scene is changed, his Brow is eas'd of Sorrow,
 Call at his House, you'll find Roast Beef to-morrow.

The next advertisement announces the holding of a flower show :—

July 31st, 1775.—A Carnation Show will be held at Thomas Smyth's, at the Red Lion, near the Welsh Cross, in Birmingham, on Tuesday the 8th of August next ; for which the following Prizes will be given, viz. for the best and completest Bazyor, 10s. 6d., the second best, 5s., to the best and completest Flake, 10s. 6d., for the second best 5s. The Blossoms to be delivered to the Stewards by Twelve o'Clock. Proper Care will be taken of them until a Committee is chosen to determine the Prizes. No Flowers to be taken away (but by Consent).

Stewards.—JOHN HALLEN, JAMES DAVIES.

N.B.—Dinner to be on the Table at Half-past One.

The following passage contains the names of a few of the games which were popular at public houses. The number of publicans called on shows the extent to which such of the games mentioned were indulged in :—

Birmingham, September 9, 1776.—The Officers of this Town (by desire of the Justices) have called on upwards of 50 Publicans, who keep Skittle-Alleys, Billiard Tables, Roley-Poley Tables, Tennis Courts, &c., or suffer other unlawful Games in their Houses, and gave them Notice to bring particular Sureties on License-Day (which is THIS DAY) that they would put down all such Skittle-Alleys, Billiard Tables, Roley-Poley Tables, &c., otherwise their Licences would not be continued :—And further the Officers gave them Notice, that Enquiry would be made in future, and if any Person was found to suffer such unlawful Games, they would be prosecuted, and forfeit 40s. for the First, and 10*l.* for the Second Offence, and loose their License.—All other

Publicans, of whom the Officers have had no Information, are desired to take particular Notice of this Advertisement.

We quote the next paragraph with great pleasure. It is a protest against one of the most barbarous sports of the time. It is gratifying to find that there were men who felt the abomination of deriving pleasure from such practices :—

February 10, 1777.—A correspondent observes, that amidst the wantonly cruel Diversions, for which this Country is reproached, there is none that deserves more severe Reprehension than the absurd and scandalous custom of throwing at COCKS on SHROVE TUESDAY.—If, says he, Mercy be the certain and glorious Characteristic of true Bravery, what Epithet can be found sufficiently opprobrious, for the Commission of unprovoked Barbarity.—To fix an harmless, inoffensive Creature to a Stake, to be tortured for the amusement of Idleness and Inhumanity, is a Practice that would disgrace the most savage Nation : and he earnestly hopes for the Honour of his Country and of Christianity, that those who are possessed of the Power, will be diligent to apply the most effectual Means, for the Prevention and total Suppression of a Custom that is altogether injurious to the Character, and inconsistent with the Principles of a brave and generous People.

What should we say at the present time of a theatrical apology like this :—

June 17, 1777.—To the Public.—The Manager and Performers of the NEW STREET THEATRE are under the greatest Concern, that the Gentlemen and Ladies, who honoured them with their Presence on Friday Evening last, should meet with any Disappointment ; *but the extraordinary Thinness of the House, rendered it impossible for them to contribute to their Entertainment.*—Great Care and Attention having been paid to the getting up of this PLAY (The Count of Narbonne,) the Manager flatters himself they will find the Performance of this Evening worthy of their Patronage.

Here is another proof of the growth of a better feeling on the subject of brutal sports—if not amongst the people, at least with the authorities. The determination to put down bull-baiting is a good sign :—

Birmingham, July 10, 1777.—There having been great Disturbances in the Hamlets of Deritend, Erdington, Saltley, and other Places, in or near this Town, occasioned by Bull-baiting, and other Methods made use of to collect disorderly People together, to the great Annoyance of the Publick Peace ; Therefore this is to forewarn all Publicans and others from having Bulls baited, Races, or any other such Methods usually practised at Wakes, as the Magistrates are determined to punish all such People to the utmost of their Power ; and in order for the detecting of all Offenders, and for the more proper preserving of the Peace, the Magistrates will appoint an additional Number of Constables to take into Custody all such who shall be hereafter offending.

We will now have a peep at Vauxhall :—

July 14, 1777.—At the Musical Entertainments at Vauxhall on Friday last, there was a more numerous and brilliant Company than was ever known at that Place on a like Occasion ; The Gardens are in fine Condition, the Beauty of which, added to the elegant

Appearance of the Company, particularly the Ladies, the Serenity of the Evening, and the admirable Performance of the Concert, diffused a Cheerfulness and Approbation over the Countenance of every Person present, highly grateful to the Performers, (who seemed to vie with each other) and the Proprietor of the Gardens, for his unremitting Endeavours to please and oblige the Public.

On September 8 we read this welcome bit of news :—" We hear the Justices have resolved not to renew the Licenses of any of the Publicans who encourage Cockings, Skittles, or other unlawful Diversions."

In 1778 a new concert booth, at which theatrical entertainments were given, was erected in the Moseley Road. On June 8 the following performances were announced to take place :—

This present MONDAY, June 8th, At the New CONCERT BOOTH, near the Plough-and-Harrow, Moseley Road, will be performed a Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music. —The Vocal Parts by Mr. Butler, and Mrs. Smith (late Mrs. Woodman,) from the Theatre-Royal Covent-Garden. Between the several Parts of the Concert will be presented (gratis) a TRAGEDY called *The London Merchant ; Or the History of George Barnwell*. To which will be added, a Farce, called *the King and the Miller of Mansfield*. Before the Play will be spoken an occasional PROLOGUE.

The Proprietors having been at a great expense in fitting up the above Booth in a commodious manner, and being determined to use their utmost Efforts in getting up all the New Pieces performed at the Theatres Royal in London last Winter ; hope to meet with the Encouragement of the Ladies and Gentlemen, &c., of Birmingham and its Environs.—Boxes 3s.—Pit 2s.—Gals. 1s.

The Doors to be opened at Six, and to begin exactly at Seven o'clock. Subscription Tickets to be had of Mr. Graham, at Mr. Heath's in Cross-Street ; of Mr. Cross, at Mrs. Gastrill's, Upper Queen-Street ; and of Mrs. Collins.—No Persons to be admitted behind the Scenes.

N.B. The Days of performing this Week, are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday ; and for the future, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays only.

This place of amusement came to a melancholy end. On August 17 we read the first report of its destruction :—

On Thursday night last, the Concert Booth, erected on the Moseley Road, about a mile and a half from hence, for Theatrical Amusements, was burnt to the Ground, and all the Scenery, great part of the Company's cloaths, &c., were consumed. The Fire was first perceived by a Person living nearly opposite to the Booth, between twelve and one o'clock ; but the Building being composed of Timber, the Fire having communicated itself to every quarter of the House, and the Flames being assisted by a brisk Wind, every Effort to stop their progress proved ineffectual. It is supposed to have been maliciously set on fire ; but no Discovery has yet been made of the Authors of this Calamity to the unhappy Sufferers.

This called forth the sympathy of the people, and on the 24th of the same month a correspondent furnished the paper with this letter : it

affords one more proof of the kindheartedness of the people of this town :—

To the Printers of the *Birmingham Gazette*.—Birmingham, August 24th, 1778.—It is with the sincerest Pleasure that I congratulate the Inhabitants of this Town, on the singular honour they have done their Humanity in contributing to the Relief of the unhappy sufferers by the late Fire. The situation of the Actors was indeed deplorable ; after having taken infinite Pains during the last Months,—after having done all in their power to alleviate the Distresses of some Individuals in this Town, by giving them Benefits, while the miserable Pittance allowed to Themselves afforded them only a bare subsistence—just as they were in Expectation of the Approach of their own Benefits, when they might have shared a few Guineas to discharge their unavoidable Debts ;—at such a critical juncture, to have their fond hopes blasted at once, by a Calamity as shocking as the Authors of it were wicked, must deeply affect every Mind not totally lost to every humane feeling. But the noble Generosity displayed by all Ranks of People upon this occasion, transcends all praise ! Though obvious reasons had prevented their encouragement of the Theatre at Moseley, yet now every other consideration gave way to the generous impulse of Benevolence, and the Proprietors of both Houses evinced the strongest Inclination to render Service to the unfortunate Players. The Justices, too, to their immortal Honour, did not discountenance the undertaking ; and two Plays have been represented at the New-street Theatre with uncommon applause ; but whether the violent claps which shook the House proceeded from a sense of the Performer's merit, or compassion for their distress is difficult to determine ; but probably each of these motives had its share in producing the effect. Though the Profits of the nights were not quite equal to the Exigencies of the Company, yet they were considerable, and went a great way towards extricating them from their difficulties ; but if a further application was to be made to the worthy Magistrates, and leave obtained for one or two plays more, at the King-street Theatre (the Proprietors having with great good-nature made an offer of their House), there is no Doubt but every Creditor would be satisfied, and the no longer unfortunate Actors might leave the Town with Comfort and Reputation.

I am, Your most obedient Servant, NO PLAYER.

Mr. Perry, the once famous player on the musical glasses, was with us this year, and the muse was invoked to sing his praises.

September 28, 1778.—To the Printer.—On hearing Mr. Perry perform on the Musical Glasses in Birmingham.

The Gods assembled on a Time,
 (And Gods you know will quaff,)
 Of Matters talk'd in Mode sublime,
 And rais'd the jocund Laugh.
 Swift flew th' ambrosial Nectar round,
 Of things below their Chat,
 Each Deity in Parts profound,
 Convers'd of this and that.
 'Tis said the Subject turn'd at length,
 On Harmony and Ease,
 As who with most delightful Strength
 Of Melody could please.

Of Music's Sons an ample List
 Before the Gods were thrown,
 When Jove 'tis rumour'd would insist
 To name the greatest one.
 And "hark" rejoin'd th' enraptured God,
 "Such sounds divine you'll hear,
 "As yet ne'er reach'd our high abode,
 "Or charm'd the Imperial ear!"
 He spoke, and thro' th' etherial space
 Such soothing music flies,
 As ne'er before from human race
 Ascended to the skies.
 "And would you," said th' imperial lord,
 "But learn who thus surpasses
 "All human skill?—upon my word,
 "'Tis Perry with his Glasses."

VERITAS.

The entertainments given in the town were of a varied nature. This is an instance of what we suppose must be called "sport":—

July 13, 1778.—On Tuesday Evening last a Man of this Town undertook, for a Wager, to gather a Hundred Stones, placed three Feet distant from each other, in a right Line, and put them in the Bung-hole of a Barrel, by one at a Time, in the Space of 40 Minutes, which he performed with seemingly great Ease, in one Minute less than were allowed. The Ground over which he went measures 10,100 yards, wanting only 20 yards of 5 miles and 3-qrs., which is in the Proportion of 253 Yards a Minute, exclusive of the Time lost in picking up and depositing the Stones.—The Wager was decided on Winson Green, about two Miles and a half from hence.

Fire-eating, musical glasses, concerts, plays, stone-gathering, bell-ringing, and other pastimes have come in review, and now we have Fantocini.

November 9, 1778.—At the New Theatre, Birmingham, on Wednesday next, the 11th Inst., will be performed, A New Grand Exhibition,—By Mr. Breslaw and his Italian Company, likewise Master Russell, Sieur Gaetana a La Rossignoel, and particularly the Italian Fantocini, consisting of Variety of Figures elegantly dressed, just arrived from Abroad.

The next advertisement refers to a society which makes frequent appearances in the old *Gazette*. Birmingham people then, as now, were evidently fond of music.

Birmingham, 18th November, 1780.—The Dilettanti Musical Society will have a public Concert at the Hotel, on Tuesday the 21st instant. In the Course of the Performance will be introduced several select songs, by Miss Barnes, from Manchester—after which will be a Ball.

It is not a little remarkable how frequently the praises of performers in the olden days were uttered in rhyme. Here is one more example to be added to the many already quoted:—

June 11, 1781.—On seeing the part of Diggory performed at New Street Theatre.

To move the muscles of a stoick's face,
And make to laughter gravity give place,
At once is done, if PARSONS but engage
To act his part in all the World's a Stage ;
When comic mirth assumes her genuine sway,
What tongue that speaks impartial but will say
Pleasure from him must every heart derive,
Whose very looks can keep the house alive.

On Christmas Day—the day of peace on earth, and goodwill to men—the day on which He was born, whose religion was that of mercy, kindness, and sympathy with all creation, this announcement appeared, and so closed the year of 1780 !

December 25, 1780.—COCKING.—At Mr. Pemberton's, at Duddeston Hall, commonly called Vauxhall, nigh Birmingham, will be fought the Annual Subscription Match of Cocks on New Year's Day and the day following, being Monday the first, and Tuesday the second of January.

Gateley, of Bromsgrove,
Cartwright, of Birmingham, Feeders.

In 1781 an al fresco ball was thus announced :—

Birmingham, Vaux-Hall, 2nd July, 1781.—La Danse en le Jardin.—A. Pemberton respectfully acquaints his friends and the Public, That on Thursday next, the 5th of July, will be a PUBLIC TEA DAY.

Whatever else the town lacked there certainly was no lack of amusements, good, bad, and indifferent, in old Birmingham.

§ 5. MANNERS, CUSTOMS, ETC.

The selections which it will be needful to make illustrative of this part of our subject are not very numerous. Some of them border on, if they do not actually reach, the ludicrous, others are curious, and others show that bad manners and bad customs are very long lived, for they exist “even unto this day.” From this advertisement we learn that Catherine Cooper was not particular about letting the world know all about her domestic troubles. Here is an unique advertisement :—

February 24th, 1772.—Stolen, strayed, misled, or by Violence withheld from his Wife, Catherine Cooper, John Thomas Cooper, Druggist, only Son of Mr. Joseph Cooper, in Bull Street, Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, Brush-Maker.—Whoever can

and will give any Intelligence of the said John Tonks Cooper, to his wife Catherine Cooper, at Mr. Babington's, No. 83, in Bull-Street, Birmingham aforesaid, so that she may come to the Speech of him, shall receive FIVE GUINEAS Reward.—Note, He is about five Feet four or five Inches high, of a pale Complexion, with his own light brown Hair, either tied behind or curled, and in general is very neat and clean, and of genteel Appearance : Though the said John Tonks Cooper has been misled by his Parent, if he will return he will be kindly received, in hopes of future Happiness, by his most affectionate Wife, for there never was any Misunderstanding between them. Whoever harbours or conceals in private the said John Tonks Cooper, from his Wife Catherine Cooper, after this public Notice, shall answer it as the Law directs.

CATHERINE COOPER.

Trade had its peculiar methods of publicity in those days ; and some of the traders were not very scrupulous as to what they said about each other. Thus a Mr. Durnall, brazier and tin-plate worker, at the Tea Urn and Candlestick Warehouse, No. 49, High Street, near the Welch Cross, advertises Dutch Tea Urns and Block Tin-plate Kitchen Furniture, a long list of which is given, and adds that “the above articles he will sell on the lowest terms, being the *real manufacturer*.” Immediately under this advertisement the following “Card” is printed.

A CARD TO MR. DURNALL, Brass Candlestick Maker.—Blunt and Wells, Lovers of Truth, and Enemies to Puffing, present their compliments and would be extremely glad to know where his Real Manufactory of Dutch Tea Urns, Coffee Pots, Pewter Plates and Dishes, &c., &c., &c., is carried on, having never had the Pleasure of seeing it: As to his new Boasted Method of Making Block Tin Kitchen Furniture, they are well convinced, may be made at most Tin Plate Workers in Town ; for it is well Known amongst the Trade, that his present Workmen are not superior to other People's, but we believe upon Trial would be found inferior to many.

This is a record of a common occurrence in the olden time :—

April 27, 1772.—Wednesday morning last, about Three o'Clock, the Birmingham Coach, coming to London, was robbed near Chapel-House by a single Highwayman, well mounted, who took from the Passengers about Twelve Pounds, with which he got clear off, though there were no less than 11 Men Passengers in and about the Coach. A proper Guard for the future will attend the Coach.

A vivid picture of a rather exciting, but not very creditable event is contained in the following paragraph. The name of the celebrated Divine is not mentioned :—

May 11, 1772.—Information being received that a celebrated Divine from London was to preach in Deritend Chapel in this town. Yesterday, a Multitude of Persons from the neighbouring Villages of West-Bromwich, Wednesbury, &c., attended ; the Anxiety of these deluded People was so great, that as soon as the Doors were opened, they flocked in with such Rapidity that no Regard was paid to persons in respect of Sitting. As soon

as the Discourse was ended, the Preacher expatiated upon the Rudeness of his followers, but was unfortunately interrupted by a genteel dismissal from that consecrated Mansion ; accordingly in the Afternoon, having made a decent Retreat, he mounted a Table, and preached on the Banks of the River Rea to a numerous Audience.

Threatening letters were very much in vogue at this time ; and unhappily we are not without similar cowardly productions in our more enlightened days.

November 30th, 1772.—Whereas the under threatening Letter was sent to Mr. J. Guttridge, Engraver, Catharine Street, Birmingham, on Wednesday Evening last, the 25th inst., by some malicious Person or Persons.

“Wednesday night, 25th November, Catharine Street, Birmingham.

“Sir,—I Write these few Lines to Lett you know that if you go on the way that you Do you will utterly ruin the trade for Ever, not that it is anything to me, for I am an Inde—nt. But I am quite sorry to hear that such Infamous Preparation should be made for a Person in your Station a Wife and 3 Small Children Should Come to want which they Certainly must, if this horrid act is Put in Execution (viz.) Burning the House Down over your Heads or Murdering you by Night the first Opportunity. From your well-wisher,

GOODMAN TRUTH.

“P.S. My Brother Joseph Engraver Says he can’t get work to Do upon your Account. Putting so much on that a Man Can’t get Bread to eat sooner than Starve he will Die for you are a Spoil Trade Son of a Bitch to put as much work on anything for 6d. as any other Graver in Town will for 1s. 6d., But by G—d weel gett shut on you.”

A Reward of Ten Guineas will be given to any Person that will discover the Author of the said Letter, upon Conviction ; and if more than one were concerned if either will discover his Accomplice or Accomplices, he shall be entitled to the same Reward, and Endeavours used for a Pardon.

J. GUTTRIDGE.

Among the other strange customs of the times, that of wife-selling was not wanting. From the records of Birmingham life our French neighbours will find a cause for one of their four characteristics of the English people. The “sell my wife at Smithfield,” was not an invention of the enemy. It appears from the following extract from the *Annual Register* that the custom was to lead the woman through a toll-gate and pay toll for her as if she were a beast, and then sell her. From other sources we learn that a halter was placed round the woman’s neck by which she was led ; and thus the beastly character of the transaction was completed. The notice of one of these disgraceful acts is thus recorded in the *Annual Register*, August 31. “Three men and three women went to the Bell Inn, in Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, and made the following singular entry in the toll-book which is kept there :—

'August 31, 1773, Samuel Whitehouse, of the parish of Willenhall, in the county of Stafford, this day sold his wife, Mary Whitehouse, in open market, to Thomas Griffiths, of Birmingham, value one shilling. To take her with all her faults.

'Signed, Samuel Whitehouse and Mary Whitehouse.

'Voucher, Thomas Buckley of Birmingham.'

The parties are all exceedingly well pleased, and the money paid down as well for the toll as purchase."

Here is a paragraph which was thought important enough to have a cross head to itself, and to be called

March 25, 1776.

INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY.

One Evening last Week, a Company of jocular Friends being assembled at a respectable Drinking House not 100 Miles from the Swan Inn, in this Town, two Gentlemen tendered a Guinea each, to receive One Hundred Pounds between them in Return, from a *shrewd old Wag*, not less celebrated for a *happy Quaintness of Speech* and *facetious Turn of Mind*, than remarkable for his *Freedom of Opinion on all Theological Points*, if he should be suffered to be buried in *consecrated Ground*.—The Wager was eagerly accepted by the old Gentleman, who archly observed, it was a Matter of very little Moment to him what became of that worthless Lump of Earth, his Body, at his Death, but the two Guineas he might *probably* find a use for while living.

The manner of announcing marriages and deaths was rather different from our brief mode of publishing these events. The young ladies seem endowed with every virtue under heaven, and always have a "genteel," a "handsome," or a "splendid" fortune. They were all "elegant," "lovely," "amiable," and "blessed with every qualification calculated to make the married state happy." It is the same with the deaths. Such virtuous martyrs never left the world as most of the people whose departures are recorded in the old papers. Reading the epitaphs in an English churchyard, a Frenchman naturally asked, "where do you bury all your wicked people?" According to these obituary notices the deaths of the wicked were never recorded, or the maxim *nil nisi bonum* was interpreted in a very generous spirit. In the case of weddings the announcements were sometimes accompanied with an Epithalamium. As illustrating the custom of the time we quote one of these :—

August 19, 1776.—Married. At Muxton, Staffordshire, Joseph Green, Esquire, of Birmingham, to Miss Betty Cotton, of Bellaport, youngest Daughter of the late William Cotton, of Etwall, in Derbyshire.

Nuptial Ode on Joseph Green, Esqr.'s Marriage with Miss Betty Cotton.

Son of Commerce, tho' to you
 Better Strains than these are due ;
 Whilst the Music of the Bells,
 To the World the Pleasure tells ;
 Deign the Freedom to excuse,
 Of a weak but willing Muse,
 Fir'd with Joy, when Truth makes known
 What does honour to the Town.

To Pleasure, ye Vot'ries of Hymen, away
 'Tis yours to be happy when Love crowns the Day.
 In Raptures advance the Appearance to grace,
 For all other Pleasures to Love must give Place.
 Then quickly ye Nymphs to the Nuptials repair
 With Flora's best Presents to welcome the Fair.
 The Arts at the Tidings awhile shall suspend
 Their Cares and their Troubles to honour their Friend.
 The Lovers of Trade, their fond Joys to display,
 A Respite shall claim from the Toils of the Day ;
 And on the Occasion disdain the Neglect,
 Of paying to Merit a grateful Respect.
 The Heart that a true English Spirit can shew,
 The good of his Country will ever pursue ;
 May such be the Man, who deserving the Fair,
 Of Life's daily Blessings the choicest may share,
 And those real Comforts from Wedlock arise,
 Which no Friends of Harmony too much can prize.

Here is another bit of

INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY.

September 23, 1776.

A few Days since, as a Lady was walking in a Piece of Ground, contiguous to a Gentleman's seat not more than two Miles from this Place, a Cow that was feeding therein, mistaking her Head Dress (from the Variety of Vegetables that appeared thereon) for a Kitchen Garden, made hastily towards her new Pasture, which threw the Lady into such a Fright, that in making her Escape, she left behind her a great Part of the GRACEFUL Furniture of her Head, which the Cow greedily began devouring ; when unluckily one of the SPITS with which this tow'ring Apparatus was kept together, stuck in her Throat, and though every Effort was tried to disengage it, the poor Creature died a few Hours after in great Agony, a Sacrifice to the present EPIDEMICAL Distemper of the Ton.

Of the ingenious tricks of the sharpers and light-fingered gentry of the time this is not a bad example :—

September 30, 1776.—A Correspondent desires the Public to take Notice that there is a Set of Sharpers who frequent Roads and Bye-ways, and by Stratagem impose on the credulous and unwary : They watch the Opportunity of a Person's coming along

the Road, and meet them at a place where they have before laid a Ring folded up in a Bill, importing the Value as Gold. The Sharper alights, and asks the Person to go halves in what he has found, to which the other eagerly assents, and pays half its denominated Value; but upon examination finds it to be, not a Gold, but a Brass one, not worth a Halfpenny.

The custom of using the streets as the common receptacle for rubbish must have been carried on to a reckless extent, when an accident like the following was possible in the streets named :—

March 17, 1777.—The Inhabitants of this Town are earnestly desired not to suffer any Heaps of Rubbish or Manure, &c., to remain in the Street after it is dark, as the same may be productive of bad Consequences: By a Remissness of this kind, a Waggon loaded with Glass was overturned in Edgbaston-Street on Tuesday Night last, and another narrowly escaped a similar Accident in Moor-Street, owing to such obstruction.

The preparations for the Fifth of November were as troublesome then as they are now. In 1777 we were very nearly losing a famous relic of antiquity by a “serpent.” It is true it would have only hastened its destruction a few years; for what the fire spared, man, a little time afterwards, destroyed. On October 27, we read :—

On Saturday Night last, about eight o’Clock, the Railing which surrounds the Cupola of the Old Cross, in this Town, was set on Fire by a Serpent thrown thereon by some Boys, who were in the Street; but being soon discovered, it was happily extinguished without any considerable Damage.—As such Acts of mischievous Wantonness may be productive of very alarming Consequences, the Magistrates are determined to punish severely every Person Offending in like Manner hereafter.—We hope, therefore, a proper Attention will be given to the Precaution, that unthinking Youth may avoid the Odium which a contrary Conduct will inevitably incur.

The next quotation gives us the record of an exploit by our local “bloods.” It seems that we had our Mohawks and Savages as well as London, and that they were as unscrupulous and dastardly as the metropolitan scoundrels whom they imitated. We hope, and believe, that our authorities were more successful in their treatment of these ruffians than their London contemporaries, for we meet with no other record of their doings in Birmingham than this, which was published March 2, 1778 :—

On Friday Evening last, as a poor Man and his Wife were walking down Digbeth, in their Way home, they were violently assaulted by a Party of disorderly young Fellows, who, for their heroic Achievements in their Cups, very judiciously stile themselves Bloods: and who, because the poor Man refused to deliver up his Wife to their brutal Rage, very gallantly broke one of his Legs in two Places, and otherwise so terribly bruised him, that he now lies without Hope of Recovery.—One of these Bravoes has

since been discovered, and diligent Search is making after his Associates, and when taken 'tis hoped the corrective Hand of impartial Justice will properly allay the Fervor of their intemperate and outrageous Passions.

Is this to be taken as a specimen of the wit of the year 1778?—

June 22, 1778.—We hear that an eminent Brazier and Tin-Plate Worker, not an Hundred Miles from Carr's Lane, has in Contemplation the following emblematical Addition to his Sign, viz—Satan painted in all his usual hideous Attributes of Pride, Envy, Malice, Rage, and Despair, accosting the Sun in the Meridian; behind him a Boy, looking with ineffable Contempt and Derision and pointing to the Fiend. Underneath the following Words :

“ ——— ——— To thee I call,
 “ But with no friendly Voice, and add thy Name,
 “ O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy Beam.”

Milton, Paradise Lost, Book 4th.

The whole to be supported on the Right Hand by an Artist, in an Attitude of addressing the Passengers, holding this Scroll, “Beware of Puffers and Pretenders,” and on the left a Boy, supporting a Shield of Azure and Gold Letters, “This is the Genuine Manufactory;” and to be defended and preserved by a Chevaux-de-Frise next the Welsh-Crow.

One more specimen of what was then thought—

INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY.


January 8th, 1781.

The Foot Race between the High Bailiff of Hales-Owen, and Beffaïre the Chape-Filer, terminated in Behalf of the latter, on the High-road leading from New-Street to the Five Ways, last Thursday Evening.—A second Match is talked of, and as the Salopian is supposed to be in training for the Purpose, it is expected the Odds on even Ground will be much in his Favour.

Rotton Park must have been an inviting place for a stranger to visit if the following statement be true :—

January 15, 1781.—A few Days ago, one of the Collectors of the Poor's Levies for this Town, went to the Lodge in Rotton Park, to receive Payment of seven Levies; when, on the Collector's approaching the House, a large Dog, between the Bull Dog and Mastiff, immediately seized him, and he very narrowly escaped being destroyed. This is inserted to put those People on their Guard who may have Occasion to go to the House above-mentioned, for Dogs are so placed that you can't go near the Doors without the utmost Danger.

In the year 1781, a Smith and Farrier named Edward Freeth died, and one William Spooner took to the stock, and shop, and trade of the deceased. On October 29 he advertised the fact and solicited a continuance of the favours of the public. To this advertisement the widow of the late Smith and Farrier adds this felicitous postscript :—

 Mrs. FREETH takes the Liberty to return her most unfeigned Thanks to the Friends of her late Husband, and will think herself still more obliged by a continuance of their Favours to his SUCCESSOR.

Everybody will be delighted to learn something about the ancestor of Jacob Wilson, the Town Crier. He also held that onerous and important office, and, as the following advertisement shows, he did not limit his labours to crying lost goods and lost children, but that he cried at funerals also on the shortest notice and with the greatest care and punctuality.

NEEDLES.

October 29, 1781.

A Quantity of White-Chapel Needles was taken up in Birmingham, in September last. Whoever has lost them, on proving their claim, and paying the Charges, may have them again, by applying to JACOB WILSON, TOWN CRYER, at No. 26, MOOR STREET; but if they are not redeemed within Fourteen Days after this Advertisement, they will be returned again to the person who took them up.

J. Wilson respectfully returns his most sincere and grateful acknowledgments to his Friends and the Public in general, who have hitherto honoured him with their Encouragement, and assures them that the same Diligence and Attention shall be constantly exerted to merit a Continuance of their Countenance and Support. Particular Care will be taken to pay any or every Sum of Money, without Delay, that may be bid by him as a Reward for any Thing, publickly cryed or Advertised by him.—He attends Funerals, in Town or Country, on the shortest Notice, and with the greatest care and punctuality.

And thus closes the year 1781.

THE BIRMINGHAM ASSAY OFFICE.

The first effort made to provide an Assay Office begins in the year 1773. On the 1st of February in that year the workers in silver at Sheffield petitioned the House of Commons for leave to bring in a bill for establishing an Assay Office in that town. And “on the 2nd of February, a petition of Matthew Boulton, on behalf of himself and the rest of the manufacturers of silver wares in Birmingham, was presented; and, after noticing the application from Sheffield, it set forth that the petitioner and others were engaged in the manufacture of silver plate, which might be considerably improved in case an Assay Office were established; but the inconvenience they laboured under in sending their goods to Chester, the nearest Assay Office, was a great interference with their success; and the petitioner prayed that if provision should be made for establishing an Assay Office at Sheffield, that Birmingham might be included.”* Of course the London gold and silversmiths were

* The Assay of Gold and Silver Wares. By Arthur Ryland. p. 171.

up in arms, and the London Goldsmiths' Company opposed the prayer of these petitions. The following extract gives us an account of their proceedings :—

March 1, 1773.—We hear that the Opposition of the Silversmiths of London against those of the Country grows very Violent, and that the former have deserted their Shops, and are patrolling over the Western Part of the Town, endeavouring to prejudice the minds of our Senators against Country Silver; the Refining of which (as it is expressed in their Petition) is a sacred mystery, and is nowhere understood but in London; nor are any good Workmen, or good Taste, to be found, but within the Bills of Mortality. Whereas the Fact is, the greatest Improvements that have been made, in the Separation of the base Metals from Gold and Silver, for this Century past, have been made, and are practised in this Town, which has distinguished itself over the whole Globe by its various Productions, and that chiefly owing to its excelling all other Countries in Machines and Tools for working in Metal. As to Taste and Elegance in Forms, compare but the Silversmith's Shops with the Productions of Staffordshire.

One of the results of this opposition was, that “A fresh Petition is ordered into the House of Commons with respect to establishing Assay Offices in Sheffield and this Town, before anything more can be absolutely determined on.” And on the same day we have this very sensible expostulation made with the London opponents :—

As Assay-Masters for Marking Gold and Silver Manufactures, are granted to Chester, Exeter, Newcastle, and other large Towns, to save them the Expence as well as the Trouble of sending their Goods to London, it is surprising that any Opposition should be made to granting this Town an Assay-Master, which produces more Manufactures in Gold and Silver than all the other Towns put together, and is universally acknowledged the Seat of Mechanic Ingenuity in this Kingdom. It is very remarkable, that in this Town there is neither a Beggar nor a Justice of the Peace; Sobriety joined to Industry forms the very honourable Characteristic of our Inhabitants; and in their present Petition to Parliament for an Assay-Master of their own, their very Ingenuity, which should secure them general Favour, is the principal Argument urged against them by the Goldsmiths of London. It is indeed likewise objected to our People that they undersell almost all the other Places in England in every Article of Hardware; here their Merit is again made Criminal, for the General Decay of all Manufactures arises from the Exorbitant Price to which they are raised, and those are certainly most entitled to the public Encouragement who send them cheapest either to the domestic Market, or to Foreign Kingdoms. The more Children a Man has in Holland the richer he is, the more Children a Man has in England the poorer he is, the People of Birmingham indeed are a happy Exemption to this Remark, who make their little ones earn a subsistence at the same Age in which little ones are earning Vice through the Streets of every other large Town in the Kingdom.

Still the opposition continued, and on March 15 we read :—

A fresh Petition has been presented to the House of Commons by the Goldsmiths' Company, setting forth, that in or near the Towns of Sheffield and Birmingham, Wares were made of Iron and Steel, and other Metals, have been plated with Silver, and Marks impressed thereon, purporting that the same are real Plate marked at an Assay Office.

This selfish and short-sighted fear and jealousy, however, were in vain. Matthew Boulton was not a man to be easily beaten. "He was," says Mr. Smiles, "a first-rate man of business. He had a hearty enthusiasm for his calling, and took a just pride in it. In conducting it he was guided by fine tact, great knowledge of character, and sound practical wisdom. When fully satisfied as to the course he should pursue, he acted with remarkable vigour and promptitude, bending his whole mind to the enterprise which he had taken in hand."* With such a man leading, we are not surprised to read that on the 29th of March, that "The Bill for establishing Assay Offices or Marking Halls in this Town and Sheffield, was read in the House of Commons on Friday last for the first time." It was read a second time and committed on April 7. On the 29th was presented a "report on the amendment made to the Bill," which was ordered to be printed. On the 10th of May the following information was published :—

We hear the Act now depending before Parliament for appointing an Assay Office in the Town passed a Committee of the House of Commons on Thursday last, and that the London Goldsmiths' Company, and also the Manufacturers of Plate in London did each of them on that Day Petition the House of Commons that they might, on Tuesday next, be heard at the Bar of the House by Council against the Bill, which is then to be reported for the Third Reading.—Notwithstanding the most infamous Reflections propagated in the News Papers, and by Hand Bills, insinuating that people who lived in Reputation in this Town have been suspected of "Clipping and Coining;" we have the Pleasure to assure our Readers that some Noblemen and Gentlemen of the most eminent Rank in Staffordshire and Warwickshire are so perfectly convinced that such Practices were never known in this Neighbourhood, except amongst People of no Character or Significance, either as Artists or otherwise, that they have voluntarily condescended to become Members of the Company which it is hoped will be established in the Town, to Authorise a Mark to be stamp'd on our Silver Wares, by which we may obtain the Honour thro' Europe of making Wrought Silver of better Standard (as well as of better Workmanship) than is generally marked at Goldsmiths'-Hall in London.

The Bill was read a third time and passed ; it also passed the House of Lords, and on May 31 the *Gazette* contained this welcome piece of News :—

On Friday last the Royal Assent was given to the Act for appointing Offices in this Town and Sheffield, for Assaying Silver Plate.—By this Act, several of the Noblemen and Gentlemen, who reside within 20 miles of each of those Towns, several of the principal Inhabitants, and a limited Number of Silversmiths in each are incorporated into two Companies ; one is stiled, *the Guardians of the Standard of Silver Plate in Birmingham ;*

*Lives of Boulton and Watt. By Samuel Smiles. p. 482.

and the other *the Guardians, &c. in Sheffield*.—Each Company is empowered to appoint in its own Town, Assayers and other Officers necessary for the faithful Discharge of a Trust so important both to Individuals and to this Kingdom.—There is no doubt that very beneficial consequences will follow this Institution.

The next reference to this subject is on August 9, when the notice of the day on which the Office would be opened appeared :—

Birmingham Assay-Office, August 4th, 1773.—At a Meeting of the Company of Guardians of the Standard of Wrought Plate within the Town of Birmingham, it was resolved to open the Assay-Office, for the Assaying and Marking of Wrought Plate, on Tuesday the 31st day of August Instant. Any Persons desirous to receive Information relative to the conduct of Business at the said Office, may be acquainted with the Rules already settled, by applying to Mr. Jackson, the Assayer.—Note, It is necessary that every Silversmith and Plate-worker do enter his Mark, Name, and Place of Abode, with the Wardens of the Company, before his Work can be Assayed.

CHARLES STUART, Clerk to the Company.

Matthew Boulton was the first to use the Act which he had been so instrumental in obtaining. We quote a list of the articles which he had assayed and marked on that occasion :—

September 13, 1773.—A few Days since the Assay-Office in this Town opened, when the following Articles, manufactured at the Soho, were assayed and marked : viz., Buckles, Spoons, Spurs, Ladles, Knife-Handles, Candlesticks, Branches, Salts, Gun Furniture, Tea Tongs, Instrument Cases, Bottle Stands, Snuffers, Snuffer Pans, Labels for Bottles, Sword Hilts, Buttons, Punch Ladles, Wine Strainers, Shoe Clasps, Whip Handles, Epergnes, Terrines, Tea Vases, Coffee Pots and Lamps, Tea Pots, Cannisters, Bread Baskets, Sugar Dishes, Castors, Ice Pails, Cream Jugs, Two-handle Cups, Waiters, Salvers, Table Crosses, Sauce Boats, Sacramental Plate, Argyles, Tankards, Pint and Half-pint Cups, Dishes, Plates, Tumblers, Cheese Toasters, Fanes, Skewers, Inkstands, Cassolettes, Toilet Plate, Fish and Pudding Trowels, Bells, Monteiths and Mazareens.

On September 20, this notice was published :—

Birmingham Assay-Office, September 17, 1773.—All Manufacturers of Plate, or any Kind of Silver Wares, are desired to observe, that agreeable to the Resolutions of the last Meeting of the Guardians of the Standard of Wrought Plate, this Office will be open for Public Business every Tuesday (excepting such Times when any general Holiday shall happen on that Day of the Week, or the Anniversary Meeting of the Company of Guardians, of which Notices will be wrote and affixed on or near the Door of the Office on the preceding Tuesdays). Two of the Wardens will attend in the Weighing Room between Seven and Nine until Michaelmas, and from Michaelmas to Lady-Day between Eight and Ten in the Morning, to receive all such Silver Work as shall be brought there to be assayed and marked. All Silver Wares capable of bearing the Marks are required (by the late Assay Act) to be assayed and marked, and all Manufacturers of such Wares who reside in this Town, or within 20 Miles thereof, are obliged by the said Act, on or before the 29th of September Instant, to enter at this office, his Name, his Mark, and Place of Abode, or he will be liable to the Penalty of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS; and in

either of the two following cases, the like Penalty will be incurred, viz. By striking on any Kind of Silver Work any Mark whatsoever that shall not have been first entered at this Office ; also by striking any Letter or Letters on any Vessel or other Thing plated or covered with Silver, or upon any Metal, Vessel or other Things plated or covered with Silver, or upon any Metal, Vessel or other Things made to look like Silver. And for counterfeiting any Assay-Office Marks, Transportation for 14 Years.

N.B.—After Michaelmas Mr. Jackson, the Assay Master will undertake to Make Gold, Silver, or parting Assays every Tuesday on which the Office shall be open for public Business, if brought to him there before Nine in the Morning, and will generally Assay on Saturdays if to the Number of 20 Papers be brought to his Shop in the High-Street on the Friday Evenings.

On August 8, 1774, the public are informed that “ The Assay Office Mark used for sealing Weights, is that of an Anchor, which it is hoped no Person will attempt to counterfeit ; the Penalty for so doing being no less than Transportation for Fourteen Years.”

We need not trace the history of this institution step by step. Its utility was soon recognised ; and the manufacture of plated goods increased so rapidly that in 1778 the following notice was published :—

Birmingham Assay Office, July 6, 1778.—At the General Annual Meeting of the Company of Guardians of the Standard of Wrought Plate, within the Town of Birmingham, held this Day, pursuant to Act of Parliament, it was resolved, That on Account of the great Increase of the Manufactures of Wrought Plate there be two Assay Days in each Week, during the ensuing Year, and that every Tuesday and Friday be appointed Assay Days, and be observed as such by the Wardens and Assayer of this Office.

C. STEWART, Clerk to the Company.

Those who desire to know more about this subject than is afforded by this narrative, may be confidently referred to the admirable little handbook on the “ Assay of Gold and Silver Wares,” by our townsman Mr. Arthur Ryland.

THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A LICENSE FOR THE THEATRE.

The theatre is one of the chief instruments in the civilization of a people. It is only great and free nations that have had a noble drama ; and it is not exaggerating its merits to say that in this respect England stands at the head of the world. It is the wisest and most rational of all amusements ; and it is more than this. The stage, even in its worst days, has exercised a beneficial influence ; its effects have on the whole been good. And yet, by a strange perversity, players have been treated

as idlers and vagabonds. The church, after having used the stage for her own purposes, cursed it, and excommunicated the actors. In no Roman Catholic country could a player be buried in consecrated ground. And those whom the great Master of the Art described as "the abstract and brief chronicles of the times," were, during their lives, the objects of petty persecution and bigoted prejudice ; whilst the noble art of playing, "whose end," the same immortal and transcendent genius tells us, "both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature ; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure," had to be practised by an evasion of the law. Theatrical performances were illegal except at the licensed houses, and as Birmingham had two theatres, neither of which were at this time licensed, the managers, as we have seen, had to resort to the street-trick of selling a straw and giving a book—they charged for a concert and gave the dramatic part gratis. A curious instance of the position of the player is afforded by the following caution, which appeared in the *Gazette* of May 31, 1773 :—

A Caution.—Birmingham, May 22, 1773.—Whereas on the mature Consideration of many respectable Manufacturers in this very populous and Important Town, the Exhibition of Plays have been deemed as extremely prejudicial to the Manufactures carried on here ; having a Tendency to promote Negligence, create Expense, and corrupt the Morals of the Industrious ; the said Manufacturers are come to a Resolution to do their utmost to prevent such Exhibitions for the future, by laying such informations before the Magistrates for the County of Warwick, as may be the Means of bringing all Persons offending against the Acts of Parliament of 10th Geo. II., Chap. 28 ; 17th Geo. II., Chap. 5th ; and 25th Geo. II., Chap. 36 ; (wisely provided by the Legislature, to prevent Music Meetings and the Acting of Plays, Interludes, Comedies, Tragedies, Operas, Farces, and other Entertainments of the Stage, without legal Authority) to condign Punishment. And this public Notice is given to prevent Persons accustomed to let Houses and Rooms for that Purpose, as well as Performers of this Kind, from putting themselves to unnecessary Expenses. And as this Step is taken to prevent as far as may be the Increase of Vice and real Injury to Manufactures, of such Importance to the Commerce of this Kingdom, 'tis to be hoped this Mode of Prevention will take away the disagreeable Necessity of executing the Law.

This illiberal announcement was not allowed to pass without a protest. On the 31st of the same month a correspondent thus takes up the cause of the "poor strollers" :—

To the Printer of the Birmingham *Gazette*.—I have observed, in several of the public Papers, a CAUTION, THREATENING a Prevention of the usual Theatrical Entertainments here, which not only seems to owe its origin to Prejudice and Ill-nature, but carries with

it Abundance of Nonsense and Absurdity ;—Certainly the poor Players must tremble when they behold so many Articles of Law mustered up, and brandished forth as Rods for them, and the ingenious CAUTION WRITER vowing CONDIGN Punishment, should they dare represent Characters which are drawn by the inimitable Shakespeare and others, who do Honour to human Nature.—Is this Law Thunderer fearful a Mirrour might be held too near him? Or is he so very polite and complaisant to the Public of Birmingham, to attempt depriving them of the most rational Amusement, because, forsooth, he may not relish it? No, this is not the case :—like a good Pastor, he seems tenacious of their morals ; But I would beg leave to ask the Gentleman—does a well wrote Play, wherein the most excellent Precepts are enforc'd ; where Virtue is drawn in all her Loveliness and Beauty, and Vice unmask'd, appears in her native Ugliness and Deformity, despis'd and punish'd—does this “ ENCOURAGE VICE ? ”—Does a Man go from such a Representation with his morals injured?—To think so is equally false and absurd, as to advance it “ PROMOTES NEGLIGENCE AND IDLENESS.”—The Plays here never begin before that part of the Evening, when it cannot possibly effect the Mechanical Branches of Trade ; and if the Labourer is resolved to spend his shilling, I leave it to any judicious Person to determine whether his Morals receive a greater injury in seeing a good Play, or stupifying himself, and getting drunk in an ale house.—The Advertisement would seem to intimate, a Majority of the principal Gentlemen of the Town have determined a Prevention of Plays ; but as this, Mr. Printer, I am very certain, is not the Case, it appears very clear the CAUTION has its rise from some private Pique or Offence ; and (to speak in a Mercantile Stile), shall I, if a tradesman has offended me, endeavour his Ruin, by using every effort to prevent a whole Town dealing with him?—The resentment is ungenerous and unmanly.—The Liberality and Generosity of the Gentlemen of Birmingham are so well known, and so often experienced, as not to need any Encomium ; and I will not pass so ill a compliment on them, as to say I think they will suffer the Expulsion of an amusement, which they have so long, and so liberally supported, for the Whim, Humour, or Caprice of one or two Individuals. A. Z.

It was not likely, in a town so large, and making such progress as Birmingham, that the people would remain contented with such an anomalous state of things. Prejudice and Puritanism were, however, too strong for the lovers of the drama, and one fierce battle had to be fought and lost before the victory was obtained. To the history of this battle the present chapter is devoted.

Before entering upon the record of the contest, however, it will be well to place before the reader a brief record of how theatrical matters stood in Birmingham prior to the year 1775—the era of this well-contested fight. Hutton tells us “ Theatrical exhibition in Birmingham is rather of a modern date. As far as memory can penetrate the stroller occupied occasionally a shed of boards *in the fields now Temple-Street* : Here he acted the part of Distress in a double capacity. The situation was afterwards changed, but not the eminence, and the

Hinckleys dignified the performer's booth. In about 1730, the amusements of the stage rose in a superior style of elegance, and entered something like a stable in Castle-street." The price of admission he tells us was three-pence a head. About 1730 a theatre was built in Moor-street, and in 1752 a larger one in King-street, which was enlarged in 1774. On May 29, 1775, we find the following announcement: "The Theatre in King-street, which has been rebuilt, and is now elegantly fitted up with new Scenery, Machinery, Chandeliers, and every necessary Decoration, will be opened for the first Time on Monday next the fifth of June, under the direction of Mr. Younger."

In the same year the Theatre in New-street, now the Royal, was erected, according to Hutton, "upon a suitable spot, an extensive plan, and richly ornamented with paintings and scenery.—Expense seems the least object in consideration." It was not, however, until 1780 that the "superb portico" was added. On June 27 we have a report of the opening of the new Theatre:—

On Monday last the new Theatre in this Town was opened with the Comedy of "As you like it," and the Entertainment of "Miss in her Teens;" a Prologue (said to be written by Mr. Foote) was spoke by Mr. Yates, which was suitable to the Occasion, and very well received by the Audience. The drawing up of the Curtain about the Middle of the Prologue, discovering a most magnificent Scene of a Palace, had a very fine Effect, and was received with a prodigious Burst of Applause. The different Parts in the Plays performed this Week have been well filled, and the Performers in general met with universal Approbation. Particular Encomiums are due to Mr. Columba, from the King's Theatre, who painted the Scenes, which are allowed to be as well executed as any in London. The Audience each Night has been brilliant and numerous, and the Theatre is built upon a most excellent Plan both for Company and the Performers, and does Mr. Saul, the Builder, much Credit: it is supposed to be as good, if not the best House in England out of London.—One Circumstance we are sorry to remark—that several of the Gentlemen that appeared in the Boxes were dressed in a very improper Manner for so conspicuous a Place, and it is recommended to them in future to pay more Respect to the Ladies, by dressing themselves in a Manner suitable to the Company, and as Gentlemen should who appear in the Boxes.

On the 11th of July the prologue referred to in this report is given:—
A Prologue, written by Mr. Foote, and spoken by Mr. Yates, at the Opening of the New Theatre in this Town.

From fiddling, fretting, Monsieur and Signior,
And all the Dangers of the Italian Shore;
From squeaking Monarchs, and chromatic Queens,
And Metastatio's mixed and mangled Scenes,
Where Fashion, and not Feeling, bears the Sway,
Whilst Sense and Nature coyly keep away,

I come. All hail the consecrated Earth *
 Whose bounteous Bosom gave our Shakespeare birth,
 Gave that great Master of the Scenic Art,
 To Feed the Fancy and correct the Heart,
 To check th' unruly Passions' wild Career,
 And draw from Pity's Eye the tender Tear ;
 Of Folly's Sons t' explore the ample Train,
 The Sot, the Fop, the vicious, and the vain ;
 Hypocrisy to drag from her Disguise,
 And Affectation hunt thro' all her Lies.
 Such was your Bard ; Who then can deem the Stage
 The worthless Fav'rite of an idle Age ;
 Or judge that Pleasure with Instruction join'd
 Can taint the Manners, or corrupt the Mind ?
 Far other Thoughts your generous Breasts inspire,
 Touch'd with a Spark of true Promethean Fire ;
 Sure that the Arts with Commerce came to Earth,
 That the same Parents gave those Sisters Birth,
 Cold creeping Prejudice you dar'd despise,
 And bade this Temple to the Muses rise.
 Oh that my Tongue could utter all I feel !
 Or that my Powers were equal to my Zeal !
 Plac'd by your Favour, not by Right Divine,
 Th' unworthy High Priest of the sacred Nine,
 No tainted Incense should pollute their Shrine,
 Nor ought be offered to the Public View,
 But what was worthy Them and worthy You.

Though this is a good, yet as it is a serious Prologue, it must owe much of its Merit to the graceful Gesticulation and round mellow Declamation of Mr. Yates, the speaker.

The announcement of the completion of the Theatre was made on June 5, 1775. On that day we read :—

The Embellishment at the Theatre in New-Street will be completed by Friday next, and it is thought to be the most elegant, and certainly is the best Theatre for Summer Performances of any in this Kingdom.—Mr. and Mrs. Yates will be here at the Beginning of this Week, and it is expected the House will be opened on Friday next, with the favourite new Tragedy of Braganza, and the Part of the Duchess of Braganza will be performed by Mrs. Yates.

Competition produced its usual results, and the managers of the two newly-built theatres set to work in earnest to provide attractive dramas and good actors for the amusement of the people. The following few quotations from the paper in 1775 and 1776 will afford some indication of the bills of fare, and will recal some names not unknown to fame in histrionic annals :—

* Shakespeare was born in Warwickshire.

June 12th, 1775.—Mr. Macklin arrived here on Saturday, and will appear for the first Time, at the Theatre in King-Street, this Evening, in the Character of Shylock, and on Wednesday, in that of Sir Archy Macsarcasm, in the celebrated Farce of Love-a-la-mode, which will be performed on that Night after the Play of Braganza. The uncommon Applause given to Signor Rosignoe's Imitation of Birds, &c., on Friday last, at the above Theatre, has induced Mr. Younge to engage him for a few Nights after the Expiration of his present Agreement at Sadler's Wells, which will be some time in the next Month, when he will certainly return here, and entertain the Publick with several new Performances.

Last Thursday arrived in this Town, Miss Younge, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane ; and this Evening performs at the Theatre in New Street, in the Tragedy of the Grecian Daughter.—We hear that she will continue a few days in Town, during which Time she will perform two or three Evenings at the said Theatre.

The Entertainment of the Jubilee, with the Songs, Choruses, and Pageants, as it was intended to have been represented at Stratford-upon-Avon, has been performed in the course of last week at the Theatre in King-Street, to crowded Audiences, with universal Applause, and will be repeated there for the 4th Time.

The Entertainment of the Jubilee, with the Pageant, as it was intended to have been represented at Stratford-upon-Avon, which has been Performed several nights at the Theatre in King Street, to brilliant and crowded Audiences, with great Applause, will be repeated for the seventh Time this Evening, after the Tragedy of the Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great ; in which will be introduced the Triumphal entry of Alexander into Babylon ; and after this Week the above Entertainment will be laid aside on Account of the Preparations making for the Coronation.

On the same day we read that

Miss Younge, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, who performed last Week at Mr Yates' Theatre in this Town, with uncommon great Applause, will appear this Evening for the last Time, in the new Tragedy of the Heroine of the Cave.

July 8th, 1776.—THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.—On Wednesday Evening last was performed at New-Street Theatre, to a numerous and brilliant Audience, at the Desire of Lady Bridgeman, the interesting, historical Tragedy of the Earl of Essex. The Part of the unhappy Favourite was sustained by Mr. Henderson with the most manly Firmness and Sensibility. In the Scene preceding his Execution, where he takes a last Farewell of his distracted Wife, the silent but irresistibly persuasive Eloquence of his Countenance and Gestures worked very powerfully on the minds of the Audience, whose Tears and Distress were the most convincing and honourable Proofs of the Excellence of his Performance. Mr. Farren, in the worthy, and affectionate Southampton, and Mrs. Siddons in the afflicted, wretched Rutland, supported their respective Parts with great Propriety and Reputation ; and Mrs. Hopkins, in the haughtily, jealous, fond Elizabeth, richly deserved the Applause she so liberally received.

On February 17, 1777, we read in the *Gazette*, that “ On Monday last Mr. Yates presented a Petition to the House of Commons for leave to bring in a Bill to license the Theatre in New-Street, in this Town ; another Petition was also presented at the same Time, signed by

several Gentlemen and respectable Tradesmen, in support of Mr. Yates's Petition : both of which were then read, and referred to a Committee appointed to consider the same, with a Power to send for Persons, Papers, and Records."

The same paper contains an advertisement in which there are one or two very good suggestions. It is not at all unlikely that it was from the pen of Mr. Yates, and was issued to produce a conciliatory effect upon the undecided, and the not violently antagonistic.

February 17, 1777.—To the Gentlemen, Manufacturers, Tradesmen, &c., of the Town of Birmingham, and its Environs. Whereas a Petition is now depending in the Honourable House of Commons, for a ROYAL THEATRE in the Town of Birmingham ; and it having been suggested to several Gentleman of the said Town, that a bad Use might be made of the Power intended to be vested in the Person to whom it may be granted ; the following Conditions are submitted to their Consideration :

First, That no public Diversions, such as Rope-Dancing, Tumbling, Puppet-shows, &c., which have been lately exhibited, and are so greatly complained of, shall ever be permitted at the New-Street Theatre.

Secondly, That the Time for performing Plays shall be limited to four Months ; and if any Attempt shall be made to exceed that Time, the Magistrates for the Time being shall have the same full Power in every Respect to restrain them, as if no such Authority had been granted for a Royal Theatre.

On the above Conditions (which have already been offered to several respectable Gentlemen) it is presumed that a Royal Theatre would be very acceptable and agreeable, as it is certain nine Parts in ten of the Town are convinced that two Play-houses are greatly injurious. Therefore, whether a Theatre so regulated would not be preferable to those on the present plan is a Question submitted to the candid Public.

As a justification of their proceedings, the proprietors of the Theatre, on the 10th of March, published a copy of their little bill. Compared with ordinary Acts of Parliament it certainly is a model of brevity :—

The Proprietors of the Theatre in New Street beg Leave to submit to the Inhabitants, and to the Public at large, the following as an exact Copy of the Bill intended to be brought into Parliament for licensing the said Theatre ; which they doubt not will effectually remove every objection against the said Bill's passing into a Law.

A Bill for enabling his Majesty to license a Play-house in the Town of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, for four months every year.

Whereas it may be proper that a Play-house should be licensed in the Town of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick for four months every year :

MAY IT THEREFORE PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY, That it may be enacted, And be it enacted, by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That so much of an Act of Parliament, which passed in the tenth Year of his late Majesty's Reign, intituled, " An Act to explain and Amend so much of an Act made "in the twelfth Year of the Reign of Queen Anne, intituled an Act for reducing the Laws

"relating to Rogues, Vagabonds, Sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants, and sending them whither "they ought to be sent," as discharges all Persons from representing any Entertainment on the Stage whatever, in Virtue of Letters Patent from his Majesty, or by Licence from the Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's Household, for the Time being, except within the Liberties of Westminster, or where his Majesty is residing for the Time being, be, and is hereby*—————with respect to the said Town of Birmingham, during the Months of June, July, August, and September in every Year; and that it shall and may be lawful for his Majesty, his Heirs, and Successors, to grant Letters Patent for establishing a Theatre or Playhouse, within the said Town of Birmingham, for the Performance of Entertainments of the Stage, during the Months of June, July, August, and September, in every Year which Theatre or Playhouse (during the Time before-mentioned) shall be entitled to all the Privileges and subjected to all the Regulations to which any Theatre or Play-house in Great Britain is entitled and subjected.

In order, we suppose, to produce a favourable impression on the minds of the inhabitants, the paper in which the Bill was published, contained the following :—

Occasional PROLOGUE, spoken at the Theatre in New Street, Birmingham, in August 1776.

By Mr. Farren.

Hush'd be the Din of War !—Let Faction cease.
 And hear the Muses from the Bow'rs of Peace.—
 Hail ! Genius of INVENTION !—by whose Aid,
 Industrious Art is here successful made.
 With various skill the dextrous Hand combines,
 What Fancy favours, and what Taste refines.
 Here active Labours great Effects produce,
 And add the Grace of Elegance to Use.
 From Works like these her sons acquire Renown,
 And fix the Commerce of this Rising Town :—
 Long may she flourish !—Wide from shore to shore,
 New Arts establish, and new Worlds explore.
 From the pure Fountain of Britannia's Laws,
 Commerce her best, her sure Protection draws.
 On this firm Basis all Success depends ;
 The Pow'r that raised her greatness—now defends.
 Revere that Power, whose mild and legal sway,
 Our brave Forefathers taught us to obey ;
 Equal in Arts and Arms,—assert your Claim,
 And add new Honours to the British Name.—
 Provoked to Arms, Britannia's Sons appear,
 Nor Seas, nor dreadful Storms, nor Foes they fear.
 With hearts resolv'd they brave th' Atlantic main,
 And pant for Battles on the distant Plain.—
 Perhaps for absent Friends our Griefs may flow :
 Some Father's Bosom feel a tender Woe.—

* If the Bill passes, this Blank will be filled up with the Word REPEALED.

For Sons, for Brothers, anxious Sorrows rise,
 And gen'rous Tears bedim the brightest Eyes.—
 But Fate shall soon the gallant Youths restore,
 Grac'd with new Triumphs, to their native shore :
 With eager Joy, the fond embrace to meet,
 And lay their Laurels at their Parents' Feet.—
 May Britain prosper still thro' every Age,
 Secure from Factions and Ambition's Rage ;
 With equal Rule o'er distant Climes preside,
 Justice her Aim, and Liberty her Guide :—
 Yon lowring Clouds shall soon disperse again,
 And the Sun brighten o'er the Atlantic Main.—
 As late the Moon, whose intercepted Light,
 Shed deeper Horror through the Shades of Night,
 Resum'd her Splendour, and with Ray's serene,
 Diffused new Glories o'er the pleasing Scene.—
 So shall both Hemispheres unite once more,
 And Peace and Plenty mutual Joys restore.

We now pass to the House of Commons, and from the summary of the debates on the playhouse bill, we ascertain what honourable members of those days thought of Birmingham. The first reading was fixed for March 26, and short as the debate was, it has been made ever memorable by the fact that it was in his speech, delivered on this occasion, that the great Burke said he looked upon Birmingham to be the “great Toy*-shop of Europe,” a designation which has been repeated numberless times since, although but few persons knew its origin. This is an abstract of the debate on the first reading :—

March 31, 1777.—On Wednesday last the Proprietors of New-Street Theatre, caused the Bill for licensing a Playhouse here, for the Months of June, July, August, and September in every Year, to be brought up, to be read the first Time in the Honourable House of Commons.

That Day was fixed with the Opposers of the Bill, and *their Clerk* in Parliament, the *Friday* before ; this gave each Party Time to Solicit their Friends ; and every Member of the House of Commons that was in London had Notice of the Business coming on, so that it may be said to have been a fair Trial of Strength, as the Opposers would not listen to any Proposals for a future Day of Opposition, but declared the Bill *should be rejected* at the *first Reading*.

Sir William Bagot, when the Question was put, that the Bill be now read, moved an Amendment, to leave out *be now read*, and put in *this Day five Months*. He enlarged in general on the pernicious Tendency of Playhouses in Manufacturing Towns, (and particularised Liverpool and Manchester ;) said they promoted Idleness, increased the

* This word does not mean merely children's toys, but trinkets of iron and steel, buckles, brooches, &c., &c.

Poor's Rate, by introducing Dissipation and checking Industry, and likewise Oppression ; for when a Mistress of a great Manufactory wanted to fill a House for a Player's Benefit, she would oblige her Workmen to take Tickets instead of Money. That establishing such a Temple of Vice by Law, would in effect prove a public Support of Actresses, Figure-dancers, and the like, he supposed, for young Mechanics to take from the Theatre and undress them, in order for having right Models to work their Venus's by. It would be to study Nature to the highest advantage, and for that Reason it must be that the House were so ready to establish such useful Schools of natural and experimental Philosophy.

Sir William said he knew the present State of Birmingham from having two Theatres, and the Persons *concerned* in those Houses ; and declared that if a Playhouse *must* be licensed, no Member could hesitate to determine that it *ought* to be granted to NEW STREET THEATRE on every Account.—He said he knew that a Comedian of the King-Street Theatre had stolen last Season a Brace of Fat Bucks, out of the Park of his Friend Sir Henry Bridgman, and he supposed the Manager and other Performers had a particular Relish for Venison, as well as this obscure Son of the Drama.

Sir Henry Bridgman replied, that he had heard no solid Reasons against the Bill. All that the honourable Member had said amounted to no more than his particular Wish that no Playhouse might be licensed in Birmingham, but he hoped that would not weigh with the House against the Bill's being sent to a Committee.

Mr. Burke.—I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that if the Playhouse in Question produces Pieces with half as much Wit in them as the honourable Gentleman has excited against the Bill, in what I may call the Prologue to the Play, the Town of Birmingham will be most admirably entertained ;—but, Sir, the Honourable Member's Wit stops short even of the *Denouement* of this Piece :—Let us see something more of it : Let us hear the Piece before we declare against it. He has brought ancient History to tell you the Circumstances of the City where Iron and Steel were first wrought :—but I will likewise tell him that we are indebted to the same Diety for Amusement and Theatrical Representation, consequently what he said is an Argument for the Bill.—But, Sir, to be more serious ; I do not know that Theatres are Schools of Virtue :—I would rather call them Nurseries of Idleness ; but then, Sir, of the various Means which Idleness will take for its amusement, in Truth I believe the Theatre is the most innocent :—The Question is not, Whether a Man had better be at Work than go to the Play?—it is simply this.—Being idle ;—shall he go to the Play or some Blacksmith's Entertainment?—Why I shall be free to say, I think the Play will be the best Place that it is probable a Blacksmith's idle moments will carry him to. The Hon. Gentleman informs the House, that great Inconveniences have been found from the licensed Houses at Liverpool and Manchester. The Case is not parallel between those Towns and Birmingham.—They have a General Licence—Birmingham asks for a *Four Months' Licence only*—their Theatres are under the direction of the same Strolling Manager, who when he once enters the Town, never quits it, whilst by any Arts he can force Company to his Theatre.—Birmingham Theatre will be under the Direction of a Man very eminent in his Profession as a Comedian ; who in London conducts the most elegant Entertainment in Europe, and who never has been, or wishes to be there, but during the Time the Theatres of Drury-Lane or Covent-Garden are shut up in the Summer. I look upon *Birmingham* to be the *great Toy Shop of Europe*, and submit it to the Members of this Hon. House, to consider if Birmingham on

that Account, is not the *most proper Place* in England to have a *licensed Theatre*. The Question before us turns upon this Point—there are already two Playhouses unlicensed; now the Bill proposes that instead of two in Defiance of Law, the People of Birmingham shall have *one according to Law*—therefore, let us proceed and send the Bill to a Committee, when we shall hear the Evidence of Inhabitants of the first Reputation; and if they can prove, *that one legal Playhouse* will check Industry, promote Idleness, and do other Mischiefs to Trade, which *two Theatres contrary to Law do not*,—then it will be Time to throw out the Bill.

The Question being put, a Division followed, and the Word NOW was carried by 48 against 28, and the Bill *was read* accordingly, and ordered to be read a second Time the 22nd Day of April.

The excitement in the town as to the fate of this bill must have been considerable. On April 7 this advertisement appeared:—

This Day is published, Price Sixpence,

THE CONTEST: A BURLESQUE on some recent Proceedings relative to the Playhouse BILL. Inscribed to W——m B——n, Assistant to the Court of Requests.

Perplex'd with Trifles, through the Vale of Life,
Man strives 'gainst Man, without a Cause for Strife;
The Town divided, each runs different Ways,
As Passion, Humour, Int'rest, Party sways.—CHURCHILL.

Confligitur Magna Ira.

Birmingham: Printed for the Author; and Sold by J. Belcher, in Edgbaston-Street, and the rest of the Booksellers.

On the 28th a second edition with additions was announced, and on May 12 a third. This fact shews the interest which was taken in the subject. The second reading was, after one postponement, fixed for April 29. The debate is exceedingly curious, and an excellent report of it is given in the *Gazette*. It is prefaced by a notice which will be read with astonishment by the existing race of newspaper proprietors, but we can assure them that this was not uncommon “a hundred years ago.”—“ADVERTISEMENTS omitted This Day, on account of the great Length of the Debates on the Playhouse Bill, shall be inserted in our next.” Among the speakers for the second reading were Fox, Burke, Dempster, Wilkes, and Harris; and against it Sir William Bagot, J. F. Luttrell, Sir Henry Gough, T. Townsend, and T. Luttrell. The second reading was lost by a majority of 51,—the numbers against the bill, 69; for it, 18. And thus for a time fanaticism prevailed, and the theatre had to continue unrecognised by the law. The debate on the second reading was re-published as a pamphlet, which is now very scarce. The desire to obtain a license for the Theatre was not subdued

by the defeat. The next attempt was made by the manager of the King Street Theatre, and it was prefaced by a little quarrel with Mr. Yates, of the New-Street establishment. The playgoers of the town took an active part in the dispute. Mr. Mattocks and Mr. Yates appealed to the public, and a meeting was held at the Old Cross on the 13th of January, 1778, at which this resolution was passed in the affirmative by a very great majority :—

“Whether it was the Sentiments of the present Meeting, that the Proprietors of New-Street Theatre should proceed in the present Sessions of Parliament, to obtain an Act to license their Theatre to the Proprietors during the Months of June, July, August, and September, only, in every year?”

The petition was presented, and there is an entry in the Journals of the House of Commons, January 28, 1779, referring it to a Committee. And so the matter ends. There is no further reference to the petition in the Journals, and Birmingham had to wait many years before she reckoned a patent theatre—a Theatre Royal amongst her institutions.

THE BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.

In his admirable and eloquent address delivered at the opening of the Central Reference Library on October 26, 1866, Mr. George Dawson said, “A library is one of the greatest causes, as it is also one of the greatest results, of man’s civilization.” The year 1779 is therefore one to be distinguished above most others in the history of Birmingham, for in that year the Birmingham Library was founded. After the establishment of circulating libraries the want of a public library was certain in a little time to arise. Unfortunately the documents from which we could obtain a history of the beginning of this important undertaking are lost, and we in vain ask who were its originators? and how did they proceed in its formation? Even its first locality is a subject of doubt. The early minutes are lost, and by a curious fatality the year 1779 is missing from the otherwise complete file of the *Gazette*. In the first edition of Hutton no mention is made of the library, and in later editions it is only just referred to. “The public Library,” he tells us, “originated in 1779; each subscriber paid a guinea entrance and six shillings per annum.” He adds, “Their

number was so small that they could scarcely have quarrelled had they been inclined, and the whole stock might have been hid in a handkerchief." From such a small beginning has the present noble library sprung, and the books, which a handkerchief sufficed—metaphorically we suppose—to hide, have increased to between 30,000 and 40,000 volumes, and the members who were so few in number that they could have scarcely quarrelled among themselves, now exceed eleven hundred.

Hutton was the first to open a circulating library in Birmingham. On the 11th of April, 1750, "he agreed with Mrs. Dix for the least half of her shop, No. 6, in Bull-Street, at one shilling a week, which he opened as a book shop." In 1752, he says "I had now a smiling trade, to which I closely attended, and a happy set of acquaintances, whose society give me pleasure. As I hired out books, the fair sex did not neglect the shop." And the vain bibliopole adds, "Some of them were so obliging as to shew an inclination to share with me the troubles of the world." Our historian looked upon this fact of his life as a not unimportant event, and forty-seven years afterwards he refers to it with a commendable pride. It was something upon which he might look with pleasure and satisfaction, and we quite sympathise with the feeling which animated him when, in 1809, reviewing the past and recording the things he had accomplished, he says, "I was the first who opened a *Circulating Library* in Birmingham, in 1751, since which time many have started in the race." The next notable one was that established by Joseph Crompton, in Colmore Row, in 1763. There were also several others in the town, as is evident from the words of Hutton, and in 1779 the present Library—or as it is lovingly called—the Old Library, was founded. It made but small progress at first, and during the year 1780 there is only one mention of it in the paper, On June 12 of that year this advertisement appeared :—

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—The General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library will be to-morrow evening at Six o'clock, at the Hotel, when and where the attendance of each Subscriber is requested.

J. L. STEWARD.

In the following year the annual subscription was raised to 8s., and a librarian was appointed with the noble salary of £10 per annum. In

1781 there were two meetings held in reference to the library. On June 11 this advertisement appeared :—

“BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—A general meeting of the subscribers to this institution is appointed to be held on Wednesday, the 13 of June, at the Castle Inn, in High Street, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when every subscriber is desired to attend, to consider of some laws relative to the government of the society. This Library is formed upon the plan of one that was first established at Liverpool, and which has been adopted at Manchester, Leeds, and many other considerable towns in this kingdom. The books are never to be sold or distributed ; and, from the nature of the institution, the Library must increase till it contains all the most valuable publications in the English language ; and, from the easy terms of admission (*viz.*, one guinea for entrance, and six shillings annually), it will be a treasure of knowledge both to the present and succeeding ages. As all books are bought by a committee, of persons annually chosen by a majority of the subscribers, and every vote is by ballot, this institution can never answer the purpose of any party, civil or religious, but, on the contrary, may be expected to promote a spirit of liberality and friendship among all classes of men without distinction. The library in this town is at present in its very infancy, but it already contains a valuable collection of books, catalogues of which may always be seen at Messrs. Pearson and Rollason's ; and when the Library Room (which is already engaged in the most central part of the town) shall be opened for the reception of it, and the constant accommodation of all the subscribers, the advantages arising from the institution will be greatly increased.”

The prediction contained in this advertisement has been well fulfilled. The library has increased until it contains all the most valuable publications in the English language. On December 10 the regular annual meeting was announced, but it is one of the curiosities of the journalism of those days that we have no report of what was done on these occasions.

“BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—The subscribers to this library are desired to meet at the Castle Inn, in this town, at half-an-hour after two o'clock, on Wednesday the 12th instant, that being the time fixed by the laws for the annual meeting. Each person is desired to bring a list of 20 names, consisting of those whom he would recommend to be of the committee for the year ensuing, as they are to be chosen by ballot ; and as it will take some time to settle this list, the members are requested to attend and deliver them as early as possible ; as no list can be received after half-past three o'clock. To the names contained in the list annexed to the printed copy of the laws and catalogue of books already delivered to every member, the following are to be added :—Benjamin Blythe, Captain Carver, J. Guest, Thomas Penn, and Edwin Piercy, those persons having become subscribers since that list was printed, and being eligible into the committee as well as the rest. It is to be wished that the members would be particular to the time of attendance, as, on account of the removal of the library, several new arrangements must necessarily be made ; and in consequence of the additional expense in which the society will be involved, it will be proper to propose some addition to the annual subscription. The subscribers may rely on the proposition never exceeding the sum of 10s., which is the

limit prescribed by those who first formed the society, and for which they pledged themselves. It is hoped that, notwithstanding the additional expense, the annual subscription of 7s. 6d. or 8s. may suffice."

It is not known exactly where the Library was held at this time. In 1782, however, its habitat was changed, and the subscribers were informed that it would henceforth be held in a room "adjoining to Messrs. Pearson and Rollason's house in the Swan Yard." As the advertisement contains one or two more facts in the history of the Library, it is quoted entire :—

January 20, 1782.—BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—The Subscribers to the Birmingham Library are hereby informed that the Library Room, adjoining to Messrs. Pearson's and Rollason's House, in the Swan Yard, will be opened on Thursday Next; and that the Librarian will attend there to deliver the Books, &c., every Day (Sundays excepted) from Two o'Clock in the Afternoon to Five. Within those Hours any Subscriber may see the Books, read, and make Extracts, &c. at his Pleasure. A Fire will be kept in the Room, and the last Reviews will always lie on the Table. At the same Time the Tickets will be ready to be delivered to the Subscribers, signed and sealed by the President, and numbered according to the Order of each Person's Admission.

Dr. Priestley, the "Father of the Library," came to Birmingham in 1780, and he at once turned his attention to this institution. Hutton tells us that the Society received from his benevolent hand in 1782 "that stability and method without which no institution can prosper." On June 17, another advertisement was published, repeating the information as to the character and purpose of the Library, which was previously given in the advertisement of June 11, 1781. This information, it may be added, is repeated for some time in all the advertisements which appear concerning the Library. The important part of this announcement is the first paragraph :—

June 17, 1782.—BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—It is thought proper to give this Public Notice, That from this Time till Christmas, a Person may become a Subscriber to this Library by advancing only Four Shillings, for the Purchase of Books within the Year, in Addition to the One Guinea, paid as an Admission Fee; whereas from Christmas to June, Eight Shillings must be paid.

The slow growth of the Library is proved by the fact that after about four years' existence the number of volumes in the Library was, according to the advertisement of December 9, 1782, announcing a general meeting for the 11th of that month, only "near 500 vols." Another meeting was held on January 15, 1783, at which the following resolutions were passed :—

That the Librarian shall attend at the Library Room every Day (Sundays excepted) from Eleven o'Clock in the Morning till One, and from Two o'Clock till Five in the Afternoon.

That when a Novel consists of more Volumes than One, a Subscriber may be allowed to take Two Volumes or more ; but he is to observe not to keep them longer than the Time allowed for One only, under the Penalty of forfeiting for each Volume separately.

The first of these resolutions shows that the demand for books had increased so much that the services of the librarian were required in the morning as well as in the afternoon. The second resolution is still in force. On June 2, 1783, the announcement of June 11, 1781, quoted above was repeated.

The next notice of a meeting contained a proposal to form a separate fund for the purchase of scientific books and foreign publications. It appeared on May 31, 1784 :—

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—On Monday the 7th of June, at Five o'Clock in the Afternoon, will be held a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library, to consider a Proposal of some of the Members to form themselves into a separate Society, for the Purchase of Books of Science, and especially Foreign Publications of that Class, to be under the same Regulations with those of the present Library, and to be accessible to all the Subscribers to it, but not to take out of the Library except by the new Subscribers. If this proposal be approved, a Number of Persons intend to make a Deposit of a considerable Collection of scientific Books, in order to begin the Establishment to more Advantage.

N.B. Several of the Subscribers to the Library at Leeds have formed themselves into a separate Society, exactly similar to that which is here proposed, for the Purchase of Foreign Books in general.

HENRY HEVER, President.

The result of this meeting was published on the 14th of June :—

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—The Subscribers to the Birmingham Library having, at a Special Meeting, held this Day, given Leave to any of their Body to form themselves into a separate Society for the Purchase of Books of Science, and especially foreign Publications of that Class, and having granted them the Use of their Room and their Librarian ; a Number of them have thought proper to propose an Annual Subscription of One Guinea for that Purpose :—And Notice is hereby given, that a List of the new Subscribers is in the Library Room, and will continue there, in order to receive the Names of more Subscribers till Monday the 21st Instant, when all the new Subscribers are desired to meet in the Library Room, at five o'Clock in the Evening, to make proper Regulations for the Execution of their Plan.

In the advertisement calling the annual meeting for December 8, 1784, it was stated that the number of volumes in the Library had increased to 900 ; in December, 1785, to 1,200, and in 1786 to 1,600. At the meeting held on December 13 in that year an alteration was made in

the laws. In the advertisement announcing this change to the Subscribers is mentioned the pleasing fact that the room would soon be too small for the requirements of the Library. It will also be seen that the annual subscription was raised from a guinea to a guinea and half :—

December 25th, 1786.—BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—Resolved by the Committee, that the Subscribers be informed by an Advertisement, of the Alterations made in the Laws at the late Annual Meeting: First, the Admission Money, which has hitherto been One Guinea (agreeably to Law, No. 1.) shall hereafter be a Guinea and a Half, until the Number of Subscribers amount to three Hundred, and then be raised to Two Guineas. When the Number consists of Four Hundred, the sum be three Guineas.

II. The Librarian, in consequence of an Advance in Salary, attends to the Business of the Library an additional Hour in the Day, viz. : from Ten to Eleven o'Clock in the morning.

The Committee think it may not be amiss to remind the Subscribers, that the room which they rent at present will very soon be too small to answer the Purpose for which it was taken. By order of the President.

WILLIAM HORNE, Librarian.

The Library progressed at this comparatively slow rate in peace and quietness until the year 1787, when a dispute as to the non-admission of books on controversial divinity provoked some bitter feelings, and led to a warm discussion. The motion for their expulsion was made by Mr. Charles Cooke. Dr. Priestley published a pamphlet in opposition to Mr. Cooke's motion, the profits to be given to the funds of the Library. This was followed by another pamphlet supporting the same side of the question. The following is the advertisement of the tract, with its explanatory paragraph :—

September 3, 1787.

To-morrow will be published, Price Two-pence,

An Address to the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library, on the Subject of the late Motion for excluding Publications on Polemical Divinity. Concluding with a Remark on DR. PRIESTLEY'S Address on the same Subject.—By a Subscriber.

"Finally Brethren, be ye all of one Mind."—ST. PAUL.

Birmingham, Printed and Sold by Pearson and Rollason.

The Author of this Address, apprehensive lest the Appearance of Opposition among the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library may make the Public averse to avail themselves of the many Advantages which it confers, hopes to remove such Impressions, by observing, it is not of that Consequence as to be likely either to affect the Peace of the Society, or injure it in its essential or important Designs. To guard all the Friends of polite and useful Literature from this Mistake, he recommends them to purchase and peruse Dr. Priestley's, and the present Address, which he flatters himself may prove a gratification adequate to the trifling expense, and which will initiate them into an Acquaintance with the Origin and Nature of the present Opposition, an Opposition which

he trusts will soon subside to the mutual Satisfaction of all Parties, and to the more Permanent Establishment of Liberality and Peace. He is persuaded that the joint Efforts of Dr. Priestley and himself will contribute to promote these salutary Ends, and will also operate on the Candour and good sense of the Subscribers in general, so as to prevent any Altercation, or even much difference of Sentiment at the ensuing Discussion. He hopes for, and respectfully solicits, their serious Attention to what is proposed to them, and that the joint Addresses will in particular engage the attentive Perusal of all who intend honouring the next Annual General Meeting with their Preference. In concurrence with Dr. P.'s liberal example, he also intends applying whatever Gain may arise from the Sale of this Address, to the Funds of the Library.

In October, another tract appeared, which has been truly called "one of the most uncharitable and unchristian tracts ever written." Its author was not a subscriber to the Library, and therefore must have joined in the controversy for the sake of abusing Dr. Priestley. Here is the full title of this virulent bit of party abuse :—

October 1st, 1787.—This Day is published, Price 6d. A Letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley, occasioned by his late Address to the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library.

By Somebody, M.S.

"Thou com'st in such a questionable shape that I will speak to thee."—*Shakespeare.*

"Gloriam, honorem, imperium, BONUS, IGNAVUS, æquè sibi exoptant : sed ILLE, VERA viâ nititur, HIC quia BONÆ artes desunt, DOLIS atque FALLACIIS contendit."—*Sallust.*

Birmingham, Printed and Sold by E. Piercy, Bull Street, Messrs. Pearson and Rollason, M. Swinney, E. Jones, and the Booksellers in the neighbouring Towns.

* * As the Author of this Letter writes not on his own Account, neither does he publish for his own Emolument, but if any Profits should arise from the Publication, they will be applied to the Funds of the Sunday Schools.

The following brief extract affords but a slight idea of the character of this tract. The writer says, "To an unconcerned observer, it appears that the supporters of Mr. Cooke's motion are cautious to guard against a more dangerous evil, an evil which, however latent at present, soon by the help of partial friends may acquire force enough to burst from its concealment, and issue forth a fountain of erroneous opinions, spreading infidelity, heresy, and schism through the whole neighbourhood.—Aware of this probable danger, heightened by the restless struggles of some men for power and influence, as well as by the sleepy indolence and remissness of others, they seem vigilant, I say, to meet and prevent the evil." This opposition, it is evident, was directed principally against Dr. Priestley.

The meeting at which this motion was to be considered was held on December 12, 1787, and from the advertisement calling it, we learn

that the Library now numbered nearly 2,200 volumes. On the day the advertisement appeared Mr. Cooke published the following letter, giving his reasons for making such a motion :—

December 10, 1787.

TO THE SUBSCRIBERS OF THE BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.

GENTLEMEN.—My Motion for a Law to exclude Books relating merely to controversial Divinity, having occasioned some Party Animosity, and the Motive being greatly misunderstood, I beg Leave, before the General Meeting, to assure the Subscribers the Motion was brought forward solely with a view to extinguish, and in future prevent, uneasiness occasioned by the late Mode of introducing them. Dr. Priestley, in his Address to the Subscribers upon my Motion, declares that he had always opposed their Admission; and I have often in conversation heard several of the Dr.'s Friends mention their own ideas of the Impropriety of their Introduction; and it was from one of these Gentlemen I learned these Words, “after the present moment, mere Lumber.” I have heard Books relating to the two learned Professions objected to in the Committee, merely because they were professional, I mean Law and Physic, but never heard the same objection to those of Theology. The principal end of all public Libraries should be, to collect a Fund of Literature, both entertaining and useful, not only for the advantage of present, but future generations, but more especially for the purchase of the books of History, Science and Profession, whose Prices are in general too high for the Majority of private purses, as the Philosophical Transactions, Moren's Dictionary, Grose's Antiquities, &c., &c. The proposal which I wished to bring forward of a separate Subscription, on the Plan of the Scientific, for the Purchase of Books appertaining to the three sister Professions, sets aside every possible Idea of my Fears or Alarms relating to controversy. I have been told repeatedly, and with Warmth and Acrimony, that my Motion was originally intended as a personal attack on Dr. Priestley, and that the Subscribers who are of the established Church were angry because the Dissenters in general were better read, and consequently more liberal than them. I am sure that the Doctor will Laugh at the former idea, and as for the latter, I think every one should Laugh at it. The Society are under many and great Obligations to the learned Doctor; it was him who altered its original Plan, and put it on a more extensive scale; he amended and enlarged the Laws, and has paid a great Attention to its Welfare and growing Interests; it is now becoming a very valuable and useful Library, and promises fair to be a most capital one. Considering the future Consequence this Institution is likely to be of to this Neighbourhood, it were to be wished that any Mode likely to create Misunderstanding amongst its Members was exploded; it was therefore my motion was put up, and not only with the Approbation, but at the Request of many Respectable Subscribers, with the Prospect of preventing in future the Bickerings occasioned by the Introduction of these controversial Books, and at the same time to establish Unanimity and Concord in the Society, and to explode the idea of Party influence.—I am, Gentlemen, Your most obedient and most humble Servant,

CHARLES COOKE.

Hagley Row, Birmingham, Dec., 1787.

At this meeting several new regulations were passed; these were published on December 24, but it will be observed that no allusion

whatever is made to Mr. Cooke's motion : we learn from other sources, however, that it was carried.

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—At a general Meeting of the Subscribers to the Birmingham Library, held at the Hotel, on Wednesday, the 12th of December, 1787.—It was resolved unanimously, that those Subscribers who live one Mile from the Town be allowed one Day extra for the Return of a Book, and those who live at the Distance of Two Miles be allowed Two Days extra.

It was likewise resolved, that the Hours of the Librarian's Attendance be from Three o'Clock to six in the Afternoon, between the first of September and the first of May, and from three to eight, between the first of May and the first of September. The first Friday in every Month will be excepted from this latter Regulation, as it will then be necessary that no Books be delivered out from the Library after five in the Afternoon, on Account of the subsequent Meeting of the Committee.

The Regulations respecting the Attendance of the Librarian commence the first of January next.

On February 16, 1789, the Subscribers were requested to attend a general meeting on the 18th, to "take into consideration the providing other Premises for a Library Room, also to raise the present subscription to 10s. per annum, and other special business." In a *nota bene* we read "It is to be wished that the Subscribers will make a point of attending this Meeting, as the 'special Business' alluded to relates to a proposed alteration of the general Rule (No. 9) for composing the Committee."

At this meeting a resolution, empowering the Committee to take new premises at a rent not exceeding £25 a year, was passed, and one moved by Dr. Priestley was negatived. It also appears from the report that Mr. Stubbs had declined his offer to let his warehouse for the Library; no reason for this refusal is given.

February 18, 1789.—BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—At a General Meeting of the Subscribers held this Day at the Hotel, MR. STUBBS having declined his offer of letting his Warehouse for the Purpose of a Library Room, the following Resolutions were agreed to, viz. :

Resolved unanimously, That the Committee for the time being be empowered to take any Premises, not exceeding £25 yearly Rent, that they may think best calculated for the Use of the Library. And that they be authorised to expend any Sum not exceeding £50 in repairs that may be by them deemed necessary.

Resolved unanimously, That the Annual Subscription be raised to 10s. including every Expense.

Upon a Motion being made by the Rev. Dr. Priestley, That to each of the Lists of Names, the following clause shall be subjoined, "The Person who delivers this List declares, That to the best of his Knowledge no Person whatever is acquainted with any of the Names contained in it except himself."—A Ballot ensued,—Non-Contents 74,—Contents 72. Majority against Dr. Priestley's Motion 2.

Resolved unanimously, That the Law No. 9 be amended by erasing the Words ("giving to the President a List unseen by the Rest,") and that the following be substituted, "Sending of giving to the President, or Librarian, on or before the Day of the Annual Meeting, and prior to the Hour of One of the Day of Election, a List of the Gentlemen he has selected for the Committee, signed with his Name, either on the List or Cover." Any Subscriber omitting to give in such List, to forfeit one Shilling to the Fund.

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Rev. CHARLES CURTIS, President.

The controversy which arose from Mr. Cooke's motion found an historian; and on February 9, 1789, this advertisement appeared:—

February 9, 1789.—This Day is published, Price 4d., *THE CASE FAIRLY STATED*; containing a short Account of the Institution of the BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY, with the Circumstances, as they arose, which occasioned the present Struggle between the Subscribers, who are Dissenters, and those of the Church of England, as well as the other Members of the Society; with a View to exculpate the latter from the Accusation of being the Promoters of Strife; and to prove to the more temperate of the Society, and the Public, that they act only on the defensive.

"Beware

"Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,

"Bear't, that the opposed may beware of thee."

Shakespear.

By a SUBSCRIBER and a CHURCHMAN.

Birmingham, printed and sold by E. Piercy, E. Jones, and M. Swinney.

The Profits, if any arise, from the Sale of this Pamphlet, will be given to the General Hospital.

The difficulty about the room had evidently set the friends of the Library to consider how best to provide a building of their own. At this period of our history the one great principle exciting public interest was the Tontine. There were tontines proposed for almost every undertaking, much in the same way that Limited Liability is applied at the present time. There was the Universal Tontine, the Particular Tontine, and Tontines to remedy almost all the evils under the sun. The friends of the Library resolved to use this popular plan for raising money, and accordingly in 1789 this advertisement was published:—

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—A subscription is opened in the Library for two hundred names, to raise one thousand guineas for the purpose of building a new and complete Library, to be let to the Society at £25. per annum, on a Tontine plan. Those gentlemen who wish to subscribe for one or more shares, not exceeding ten, are desired to send their names to the Librarian immediately. Any person having a freehold spot of land in a central situation to dispose of, is requested to send his terms, in writing, to Mr. Horne, at the Library:—And any builder wishing to undertake the building, may send their plan and estimate to the same. The land must be at least two hundred, and from that to three hundred square yards."

The Library had now increased to 3,400 volumes. At the annual meeting held on December 9, 1789, the following resolutions were adopted :—

Resolved—“That the following Words stand as Part of the seventh Law, viz., after the Words ‘General Meeting,’ and the same shall be signed with the Proposer’s Name, otherwise no notice shall be taken thereof.”

Resolved—“That Subscribers residing 20 miles or more distant from the Library, be allowed to keep a Book four days extra, instead of three.”

The thanks of this Meeting were unanimously voted to the Rev. C. Curtis, President, for his Attention and Conduct in the management of this Library.

In the year 1790 the Library was removed to the Upper Priory ; a fact which we learn from the following advertisement :—

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY, April 26, 1790.—The Librarian is ordered to give Notice to the Subscribers, that on Account of the Removal of the Books, the Business of the Library will be suspended this Day, the 26th inst., until Wednesday the 5th of May next ; during which Time not any Books can be delivered out, or received in ; and that on Wednesday, the said 5th of May, the Library Room in the Upper Priory (late Mr. Payton’s Repository) will be opened at the usual Hours.

The members of the medical profession had also formed a Library ; for on December 6, 1790, a meeting was called for the 9th, “at the Union Tavern, Cherry Street,” at which “the company of such Practitioners in the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham who wish to encourage this Institution is particularly requested.” The Medical Library still exists in connection with the Old Library, and numbers about 7,000 volumes. At the annual meeting held in 1791, an alteration was made in the hours at which the Library should be open :—

December 19, 1791.—BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—At a General Meeting of the Subscribers held this Day, at the Shakespeare Tavern, in New Street, the following alteration in the Hours of the Librarian’s Attendance was agreed on, viz., That he attends in future from Eleven o’clock in the Morning till One, and from Three o’clock in the Afternoon till Six, when the Library will close ; and also that it be opened again at Seven o’clock, and continue so till EIGHT every Evening

The above alterations to take place on Thursday, the 22nd Instant.

The late Treasurer having intimated by the Chairman his Intention of declining that Office in future,—It was resolved unanimously, That the Thanks of this Meeting be presented to Mr. JOHN LEE, Jun., for the Zeal he has manifested in promoting the Interests of this Society, as Treasurer for the last Ten Years. Resolved, that Mr. THOMAS COOPER be Treasurer for the Year ensuing.

Resolved that the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Rev. E. Burn, President, for his Attention to the Business of the Library.

From 1789 to the beginning of 1793 we meet with nothing more about the Tontine scheme for building a “new and complete Library.”

It was, however, making quiet progress, and on January 7, of the latter year, we read that "The Subscription of the Undertaking upon Lives, with Benefit of Survivorship, for the Purpose of erecting a Library in the Town of Birmingham, being now completed, the Subscribers are requested to meet at the Shakespeare Tavern* in New-street, on Friday, the eleventh Day of January instant, at Four o'clock in the afternoon, in order to take into consideration and adopt proper measures for carrying the same into Execution." The shares were entered in the names of 181 proprietors, varying in ages from five months to twenty-one years. The Tontine Deed is dated March 25, 1798, and 158 persons were parties to the indenture. From this document we learn that William Withering demised, leased, and set to Thomas Cooper, Charles Twigg, James Timmins, Joseph Gibbs, and John Petty Dearman a piece of land "situate and lying in Birmingham aforesaid, near to a Street there, called Cherry-street, and then lately used as a Bowling Green, formerly called Corbett's Bowling Green." The land is described "to front and adjoin at the North East End thereof, to a certain Passage there, called Corbett's Alley; and at the South West End and on the South East Side thereof, to the other Part of the said Bowling Green; and on the North West side thereof, to a new erected Messuage or Dwelling-house of the said William Withering." The dimensions of the land are then given. The lease is for 120 years, dating from June 24, 1793, and the ground rent was £11 15s. a year. The building erected on this land is the present Library. It cost £905, which was advanced "by the said Parties equally in Proportion, to the Number of Shares, of the Value of Five Pounds each." It was called the Birmingham Library, and the Proprietors were to pay an annual rent of £22 12s. 6d. only, "subject nevertheless to the Payment of the Ground Rent."

Since the establishment of the Tontine, the Library has continued its good work, though not without those vicissitudes which generally attend the history of most institutions. By the year 1860 it had grown into such a languishing condition that only the application of a sharp remedy would produce a cure. Mr. George Jabet, who may be truly called the second founder of the Library, applied that remedy. By his

*This tavern, which is so frequently mentioned in these pages, was at the west end of the Theatre Royal. The premises are now occupied by Mr. Gillott, the well-known steel-pen maker.

persistent labours in the work of reform, he induced the committee to lower the annual subscription from thirty shillings to twenty-one, and to throw open the Library to non-proprietors. The result of this wise proceeding has been, not only to extend largely the usefulness and influence of the Library, but to increase its prosperity to an unexampled and unanticipated extent. From the report presented to the proprietors at the annual meeting, December 12, 1866, we find that there were 1,113 subscribers classed as follows :—

Proprietors, at 21s. per annum	...	...	...	450
Annual Subscribers, at 21s. per annum	...	...	...	519
Quarterly Subscribers, at 6s. per quarter	...	...	...	119
Resident Members of Subscribers' Families, at				}
10s. 6d. per annum	...	...	...
				25
				<hr/>
				1113

The Treasurer's account, instead of showing a deficit, contained the pleasing statement that there was a balance in hand of over £200, notwithstanding a large increase in the purchase of books, and a considerable outlay in enlarging the Newsroom. In the days of prosperity the committee wisely thought of the future, and stated in the report that, in their opinion, "this is an opportune time for reminding the proprietors that the leases of the present premises will expire in 47 years, and that at that time the Library must either be given up or a new building erected. It would appear therefore prudent for the proprietors, out of their surplus income, to create a Reserve Fund to provide for the latter event. At present about £100 per annum might be applied to this purpose; and if for only ten years that sum were annually invested at compound interest, at the expiration of the leases it would have increased to about £8,000. The writer of this had the privilege of seconding the following resolution, which the proprietors unanimously adopted :—"That the committee be authorised to invest, at interest, at the end of each year, so much of the available balance in the hands of the treasurer as they shall think expedient, towards the formation of a Reserve Fund, such fund to be applied only as the proprietors in general meeting shall direct." Thus provision has been made for making this noble institution permanent, and for providing a building which, we trust, will be worthy of its contents.

CHAPTER V.—1781-1791.

§ I. APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

The changes which Birmingham was undergoing in its appearance at this time were considered by the inhabitants as something wonderful and unparalleled. An advertisement, which was published on January 27, 1783, contains a paragraph which, in a few words, gives us a graphic account of how extraordinarily rapid the growth of the town appeared to the most careful observers. On that day an edition of Hutton's History of Birmingham in numbers was announced. The writer of this advertisement—doubtless Hutton himself—first descants upon the importance and advantage of the study of history generally, and then, in the following remarkable paragraph, he directs the reader's attention to the still greater need for an acquaintance with the history of "principal parts." "It follows," he says, "if an intimate acquaintance with our Country is necessary, an acquaintance with a principal Part is peculiarly so. BIRMINGHAM in many Points of View may be considered in that Light; *the Name is echoed through the Commercial World; there is not a Village without her Manufactures: This Seat of Invention furnishes Ornament and Use. Her astonishing Increase is beyond Example. The Traveller who visits her once in six Months, supposes himself well acquainted with her; but he may chance to find a Street of Houses in the Autumn, where he saw his horse at Grass in the Spring. A pitiful Market Town, in an Inland County by pure Industry, in a few Years, surpasses most of our Cities. Thus singularly circumstanced, she naturally calls for a History, and invites a Reader.*" We have anticipated a little in order to place at the beginning of the present chapter this vivid picture of the growth of the town by one who was an eye-witness of the changes which were going on around him, and who knew well how to use his eyes. We shall now proceed in regular order to quote such extracts as will throw light on the words of our historian.

It must, however, be premised that all ideas of the rapidity of our progress are relative. English people in general, and Birmingham people in particular, were a slow moving, contented, "happy-go-round" race; and a growth which in the years of Hutton's existence appeared almost marvellous, would, compared with that of the last fifty years, be as the speed of one of their old "flying" machines of eight miles an hour to that of our express train at forty. We still meet with sufficient evidence that, although new streets were being made, large numbers of new houses being built, the garden-like character of the place was not yet destroyed. That the spirit was in the people which would produce the works of a later date is clear. In July, 1782, it is mentioned as a remarkable fact, consequent upon the keen opposition "amongst the sons of the whip," that coaches were then running from London to this town in fourteen hours. The alterations which were being made in the town and changing its whole aspect will be proved by the gradual disappearance of advertisements of such houses to be let or sold as those we have previously quoted. They are very few during this decade; and, of course, will become still fewer and fewer as we come nearer our own time, and the ten years between 1781 and 1791 were especially marked by the beginnings of some of the most important changes made in the appearance of the place. That notable bit of work, once the pride and boast of Birmingham people, the Crescent, was begun. The large estate of Dr. Ash was sold for building purposes, and Ashted was formed. Birmingham was now a town of between 50,000 and 60,000 inhabitants, and was daily increasing in numbers both by births and immigration, so that new houses were continually needed, and new streets were being made out of her fields and her gardens. Hutton thus gives the history of Ashted:—"Ashted received its name from the worthy Dr. Ash, who, in 1783, saved my life. He had by skill and assiduity acquired £25,000. Sir Lister Holt granted him a lease for 99 years of a large plot of land on the north of Birmingham, on which he erected a sumptuous house. His practice declining, it hurt his spirits, and he told me he had built one house too much. He afterwards disposed of the lease, and ended his days in London. A cupola rose from the roof of his house; a pulpit and pews were within; and it became a chapel.

Streets now [1812] cover his fields, and Ashted is become a hamlet to Birmingham."

In another place the historian says :—" I well remember, seventy-one years ago, July 15th, 1741, standing with my face towards the east against Pritchett's timber yard, now the carrier's warehouse, Dale End, when all the lands before me, were meadows ; and on my left not a house was erected. Now the front prospect is shut up ; and the buildings extend on the left to Vauxhall, three quarters of a mile."

But to resume. The first advertisement we have is that of a house in Great Charles Street :—

September 9, 1782.—To be Sold by Private Contract, a good substantial DWELLING-HOUSE and Premises, with an entire Yard and Garden, situate in Great Charles-street, opposite the New Market, now let under an Agreement for a Lease for Six Years, from Lady-Day next.—For further particulars enquire of Mr. Bragg, No. 8, Weaman-Street.

The next gives one a pleasant notion of the condition of Warstone Lane at this time. All Birmingham people approaching middle age will remember the pretty cottages and gardens which characterised this part of the town :—

November 24, 1783.—A COUNTRY HOUSE.—To be Let, at Christmas or Lady-Day next, very pleasantly situated in Warstone Lane, within half a Mile of Birmingham.—For Particulars enquire of Mr. John Hawkins, near Saint Paul's Chapel, Birmingham.

Every one knows what the Hinckleys new and old now are. Not a hundred years since the land now occupied by some of the worst class of houses in the town was open ground, or enclosed gardens, with fruit-trees and flowers ; and there was a Hinckley Hall ! Healthy "bracken and fuz ; but look at it now !" The next two advertisements take us to this delectable part :—

November 15, 1783.—To be Let, at Christmas next, or sooner if required—A substantial Messuage or Dwelling-House, situate in the New Hinckleys, consisting of Three Rooms on a Floor with three good Cellars, a Stable for *Two Horses*, a *large Garden and Summer-house*, all entire, late in the Occupation of Mr. John Taylor, deceased. The House will be very convenient for a Manufacturer, as there is some vacant Land adjoining the said Garden, upon which the Proprietor has no objection to build any Quantity of Shopping that may be required for a responsible Tenant. Any Person willing to treat for the same, may view the Premises by applying to Mr. William Russell, at Summer Hill ; or of Mr. William Price, in Hill-Street, Birmingham.

December 8, 1783.—To be LET and entered upon immediately. A House, with a large Quantity of Shopping behind the same, situated in that part of the New Hinckleys leading up to Hinckley-Hall, late in the possession of Mr. Iliffe.—For Particulars enquire of Joseph and Benjamin Fincher, No. 11, Spiceal Street. Birmingham.

The houses, however, which were then being erected, were of a somewhat different kind to the courts and blocks which have been run up in our time. Most of them were still adorned with gardens. And in 1783 a "modern built house" like this was to be let in Edgbaston Street.

December 15, 1783.—To be Let, and entered upon immediately, a large Handsome modern-built HOUSE, situate in Edgbaston-street, containing on the first Floor two Parlours, a large Hall or Shop, a Kitchen and China Pantry; on the second Floor, four very good Chambers, one of which is designed for a Dining-Room; and on the Attic Floor, four very good Chambers, nearly equal to those on the Floor below, commanding from two of the Rooms an extensive view of the Country. The Cellaring is particularly good and spacious, and behind the House in a separate Yard, is a good Brewhouse, as also a Warehouse three stories high, and a stable. Adjoining to the yard is a large Garden, containing upwards of 450 square yards, well walled and open to the Fields. Apply to Charles Lloyd, Edgbaston-street.

The next advertisement recalls the time when there were fields and gardens where Navigation, Wharf, Severn, and other contiguous streets now are. How pleasantly the words "by the foot-way from Pinfold-street to the Five Ways" read! And how strange that land so situated should be said to be "near Birmingham." But Baskerville House, on Easy Hill, was not in, but near Birmingham.

December 22, 1783.—Land near Birmingham.—To be LET three very convenient and desirable Inclosures, well supplied with water, and generally known by the Name of *Farmer Smith's Lands*, whereon are two Tenements, inhabited, and a third erecting and nearly compleated, *situate by the Foot Way from Pinfold Street to the Five Ways, at a very Little Distance from the Navigation Wharf, and one Part of which Land is contiguous to the Jew's Burial Ground.**—For Particulars and to view the Premises enquire of JOHN PHILLIPS, either at No. 4, Queen-Street, or of him at the Bull's Head, in Dale-End.

The changes now being made are about to rob the town of one of its precious bits of antiquity. The Old Cross is doomed. It has become old and ruinous. A town's meeting is to be held to take its condition into solemn consideration, and to decide upon its fate. In the month when the golden corn was waving in many a field, and the surr of the wind through its "stiff-uprising heads" might have been heard by those present, the meeting was held, and the verdict pronounced; and here is the record of the trial and sentence:—

Birmingham, August 7, 1784.—At a Town's Meeting, held the 21st of July last, at the Public-Office, in Dale End, for the purpose of considering the ruinous State of the Old Cross, agreeable to Notice given for that purpose, it was unanimously agreed, that there

* A small piece of land, still enclosed, near the canal in Granville Street.



WELSH CROSS

*Formerly standing in Piccadilly, near to Bull St
Taken down March 1808*



OLD CROSS

*Formerly standing in Piccadilly, near to Bull St
Taken down March 1808*

was an immediate Necessity to take the same down. Therefore Notice is hereby given, that all the Materials belonging to the aforesaid Old Cross will be sold by Auction, by T. Sketchley (on the Premises), on Friday the 13th of August, at Eleven o'clock in the Forenoon, subject to such Conditions as will be then and there produced.

N.B. The Furniture belonging to the said Cross, and to the Commissioners of the Court of Request, will be sold at the same time, with the Time-piece and Bell.

The Premises may be viewed by applying to Mr. Conway, Brushmaker, near the Cross.

The materials were sold; the Old Cross was taken down, and the event has been handed down to our remembrance in the following epigram:—

August 16th, 1784.

EPIGRAM.

On the Sale of Birmingham Old Cross.

Conscience's Court by auction goes,

Bidders though few, the hammer does

The business in a trice;

At sixty pounds the blow is struck,

Ten more knocks down the bell and clock;

Commissioners—no price.

A survey of the town was made in 1785-6, the results of which were published on October 2nd. From this, which is called "an accurate survey," to quote the words of the paragraph, "it appears that it now consists of 173 streets, contains 9,773 dwelling houses, of which number 6,032 are to the front, 3,738 backwards, besides other buildings (exclusive either of Deritend, or that part of the town called the Foreign), and by computation, the number of inhabitants are 53,735." Many persons still living remember the Apollo Hotel and Tea Gardens in Moseley Street. In 1787 they were advertised to be let, and the now crowded thoroughfare was then "a new street," and it was a recommendation to announce that the hotel was situated on "the banks of the River Rea." What would it be now?

March 12, 1787.—The Apollo Hotel, Bowling-Green and Gardens.—To be let, and may be entered upon immediately, That new-erected large and commodious Public House, called the Apollo Hotel, together with a spacious Bowling Green and Gardens, thereto adjoining, and with or without about four Acres of Pasture Land, pleasantly situated in a new Street, called Moseley Street, in the Hamlet of Deritend, on the Banks of the River Rea, and not more than four Hundred yards from the Market Place in Birmingham. The Place is in an improving state and increasing neighbourhood, is peculiarly adapted for Public and Musical Entertainments, as well as for that of an Hotel and Tavern.

N.B. The House is in part furnished, and a good Tenant that is likely to conduct the place with Propriety and Spirit, will meet with every Encouragement. Further Particulars may be known by directing a Line for Y.Z., Post paid, at the Printers.

The famous printer, John Baskerville, lived in a house on Easy Hill. It still bears his name, and our readers know its surroundings. Not a green thing could live, not a flower could blossom there now. He died on January 10, 1775. His wife carried on his business in the same place which, after her death on March 21, 1788, was sold by auction. The following is an extract from the advertisement of the sale. It is the description of the house and gardens, and the reader will be somewhat astonished to learn what a beautiful country residence existed at the town end of Broad Street, not eighty years ago. It was sold on the 19th of May, 1788 :—

The out Offices consist of a large Kitchen, with Servant's Rooms over it, a Butler's and common Pantry, Brewhouse, two Pumps, one hard and the other soft Water, a four-stalled Stable, and Coach House, a good Garden, with Green-House, and Garden-House, spacious Warehouses and Workshops, suitable for the Mercantile Business, or any extensive Manufactory, together with about seven Acres of rich Pasture Land in high condition, Part of which is laid out in Shady Walks, adorned with Shrubberies, Fish Ponds, and Grotto; the whole in a Ring-Fence, great part of it enclosed by a Brick-Wall, and is, on Account of its elevated situation and near affinity to the Canal, a very desirable spot to Build upon.

We have frequently had to refer to New Hall, and the beautiful grounds in which it stood, occupying almost all the land from Congreve-street to Snow Hill, New Hall Hill wards. According to Westley's View it must have been a lovely place, with its pools, and park-like appearance; well-wooded, and with pleasant slopes and gently undulating sweeps of land; as is proved by the character of the streets into which the estate has been cut. This pleasant country residence was now doomed. The Hall is to come down. The increase in the population and the demand for building land are imperative. On July 2nd, 1787, we read this advertisement—an advertisement which, we should think, was read with regret by many who were then living :—

New Hall.—To be Sold by Auction, upon the Premises, in Birmingham, on Tuesday the 24th of July, if not sooner disposed of by private Contract, that well known Mansion, called New Hall, with all the Offices and Out-buildings, except the Barn. The whole to be pulled down, and the Materials carried away within 1 Month from the Time of Sale; and the Money to be paid in 1 Month after the Sale, or before the Materials are removed. It may be viewed upon Application any Time after the 9th Inst.—Apply to Mr. Holloway, in St. Paul's Square.

The advertisements of land to be let for building are now very numerous, and some of these reveal how completely the country aspect

of the town was about to be destroyed. These advertisements apply to all parts of the town, but one of the most remarkable relates to the breaking up of the estate of Dr. Ash, and the formation of the district now known as Ashted; then composed of gardens, fields, and orchards, but now crowded with houses. The first announcement of this change is as follows :—

January 28, 1788.—Land for Building upon, and for Gardens, in the Parish of Aston, adjoining the Town of Birmingham, late the Estate of Dr. Ash. The Public are respectfully informed that the said ESTATE will directly be laid out into streets for Buildings and for Gardens.—Persons desirous of taking Part thereof, for either of the above Purposes, may be immediately accommodated with Quantities suitable to their Convenience.

The extensive Beds of good Clay and Sand upon the Premises (in addition to the desirable Situation) will afford the Tenants great advantages in the opportunity of getting Bricks and Sand upon the Spot, on very easy Terms; independent of which there will be a considerable Benefit in Parochial Payments, the Levies being about Two-thirds less in the Parish of Aston than in the Parish of Birmingham.

For further Particulars apply to Mr. Brooke, Attorney, Temple Row, or Mr. Kempson, Bath-Street, Birmingham.

The next advertisement respecting this estate gives a fuller and more detailed account of the plan :—

February 11, 1788.—BUILDING LAND in the Parish of Aston, near Birmingham, late the Estate of Dr. ASH, to be Let for the Residue of a Term of ninety-nine Years, about eighty-eight of which are unexpired. This Estate, so peculiarly eligible in its vicinity to the Town, and not likely to be surrounded with Buildings, having lately been laid out into Streets well adapted to secure the Benefit of a free and healthy Air, has sufficiently proved the desirableness of its Situation, as well as the essential advantages arising to the Tenants who have already been fortunate enough to take Part of it for Building. The quantity now let and the Preparations making, promise a rapid progress in the Buildings intended to form the Hamlet of Ashted, which is planned with more regularity and uniformity than has usually been attended to in laying out land for building in Birmingham. To render the Streets spacious they are made from sixteen to upwards of twenty Yards wide, and Levels are taken to make proper Falls for carrying off the Water, to prevent similar Inconveniences to those which have been so generally experienced from the want of attention to so necessary a Precaution.

The valuable Articles of Clay and Sand upon the Premises afford a very beneficial accommodation to the Tenants; to which may be added, the Convenience of plentiful Springs of fine Soft Water and a considerable saving in Parochial Payments; the Levies being two-thirds less in the Parish of Aston than in Birmingham.

As the Season for Building is approaching, it is hoped that those who are inclined to secure a Situation so replete with advantageous Inducements will not lose the present opportunity of availing themselves of it.

A Plan of the Estate may be seen, and every other Information and Satisfaction that can possibly be required respecting the same may be had by applying to Mr. Brooke, Attorney, Temple Row, or to Mr. Kempson, Surveyor, Bath-street, Birmingham.

N.B. A Quantity of Thorns, growing Quick, and young Trees of various Sorts upon the above Estate to be disposed of.

Here are two more advertisements showing how strong was the building fever at this time :—

March 10, 1788.—Land for Building.—To be Let for Building, for the term of 120 Years, Part of the GLEBE LAND, belonging to the Parish Church of St. Martin, in Birmingham, situate at the Five Ways. Peculiar advantages arise from taking this Land, as the Rector for the Time being of St. Martin's has (by the Act of Parliament enabling him to set the same Land) a Power of renewing the Leases within the last thirty years of the Expiration of the Term. Two new Streets are intended to be immediately laid out ; Plans whereof and further particulars may be had by applying to the Rev. Mr. Curtis, at the Parsonage, or to Mr. Charles Stuart, Attorney, Temple Row, Birmingham. Also 18 Acres at the Sand Pits, belonging to the said Rectory.

May 19, 1788.—Building Land.—The Public are requested to take Notice that the Street called Bordesley Street is intended to be carried all the way to Bordesley, and there unite with the London Roads, forming a Street of a Mile in Length, and of sufficient Breadth to admit of an uninterrupted Passage for all Carriages travelling between this place and the Metropolis ; the several other Streets intended to communicate therewith are also marked out, as well as Land in the centre of the same for a Chapel and a Burial Ground, forming together a plan for a beautiful Hamlet.—The Whole of the Land abounds with excellent Clay and Sand, abundantly more than sufficient to make Bricks for the whole Buildings. A Plan of the Land may be seen and parties treated with for Building Leases, by applying to the Office of Messrs. Meredith, and Smith, in Birmingham, or at the House called Cooper's Mill-House, upon the spot.

One of the most important additions to the buildings of the Town begun in this decade, was the plan for the erection of the Crescent. In the first mention of the subject we are told that " there is an extensive prospect, that cannot ever be interrupted by other buildings ; " and now stretching away for two or three miles there is nothing but houses. On the noble sweep of land over which the early inhabitants of the Crescent looked, fields, and gardens, and pleasant tree-shaded walks met their view ; and now—let any one take a walk along the front of the handsome houses which are erected on this very eligible site, and he will have a more vivid idea of the wonderful growth of the town than any words, or plans, or views, or quotations of figures could afford. The first mention of this project appeared on November 3, 1788.

Between six and seven acres of the Free-school land, behind the houses of Mr. Ryland and Mrs. Farmer, is taken, we understand, for building upon, by Mr. C. Norton of this place. On the most elevated part of it, and from whence there is an extensive prospect that cannot ever be interrupted by other buildings, he purposes erecting a large and elegant *crescent*, fronted with stone, &c. A plan and drawing of it has already been

made by an ingenious architect, and is now at the Shakespeare Tavern, where it may be seen. The houses will be spacious and commodious.

In a fortnight the projector had proceeded so far with his design as to make this announcement :—

November 17, 1788.—CRESCENT.—A PLAN, Elevation, and Section, of the intended Building to be called the CRESCENT, with Proposals for the same, may be seen by applying to Mr. Ransome, Architect, at Mr. Clarke's, Paradise-street, Birmingham.

On the same day this paragraph was inserted :—

November 17, 1788.—A Correspondent who has seen the design for the elegant Crescent intended to be built in this town, remarks, that the houses will be very convenient, and the situation excellent in every respect, either for a winter or summer residence, as the houses will have both a southerly and northerly aspect. A reservoir will be formed in order to supply them with good water, without the trouble and danger of wells or pumps. And it is an additional recommendation of the plan in this growing town, that there is not the least probability of any future buildings ever excluding the inhabitants of the crescent from a most agreeable prospect of the country. The range of buildings undoubtedly will be the greatest ornament to the town, and pay the subscribers a good interest for their money.

A year elapsed before we hear anything further on the subject ; but when we remember that the negotiations for a lease had to be made with the Governors of King Edward's School, we shall not be surprised at this. However, they were concluded at last, and on November 9, 1789, this announcement was made :—

We are happy to hear that the Governors of the Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth, in this Town, have let on Lease, to Mr. Charles Norton, a large Plot of ground behind Mr. Ryland's house and garden, facing Summer-hill, whereupon he has engaged to build the handsome Crescent that we have before spoken of, and which will be a great ornament to the town. The prospect it will command will be most extensive and delightful.

In the fourth edition of Hutton, published in 1819, we have the following description of this ambitious undertaking :—" The Crescent will consist, when finished, of a handsome range of 23 houses of stone, elevated upon a terrace 1,182 feet long, and 17 feet high. The centre part is 622 feet, and each wing 140, exclusive of a return in each, towards Cambridge-street, which is 141 more. Only 12 houses are finished, chiefly in the wings, which cost £10,500. The remainder, which are to cost £200,500, are at a stand, owing to a ruinous war with France, which has been the destruction of our commerce, caused 500 of our tradesmen to fail, stagnated currency, and thinned the inhabitants."

In an advertisement on December 8, a house is announced to be let in that "increasing situation, Bordesley-street, leading out of Park-street into Digbeth, and very near the intended Wharf." Hurst Hill, "a spot of land" lying at the back of Smallbrook-street, is also to be let for building. And in March 1789 there is to be let "for building upon, or for gardening, a Piece of land called Bell-rope Croft, situate by the side of the Road leading from Birmingham to the Five Ways, adjoining King Edward's Place." The method of dealing with Ashted will be seen by this advertisement :—

April 6, 1789.—CRESCENT.—A Subscription is opened and nearly filled for erecting a CRESCENT at Ashted, to consist of 24 Houses to range on each side of the Mansion-house built by Dr. Ash. So delightful a Situation for the Purpose, would admit of much being said in its Praise, but in this Neighbourhood it is sufficient to remark, that it was the favourite Spot of the above eminent Physician during his residence in Warwickshire.

Any Lady or Gentlemen desirous of becoming a Subscriber may see the Plans, and be acquainted with other Particulars, by applying to Mr. Brooke, Attorney, Birmingham.

In this year they were beginning to build round the Hospital. The advertisement almost reads like a myth, when we look at the neighbourhood now :—

May 11th, 1789.—To be Let on Building Leases, a Spot of Land, containing upwards of three Acres, now occupied in small gardens, lying on the South Side of Summer-lane, Birmingham, immediately beyond the Hospital, and separated from the Ground belonging thereto by a Brick Wall. The situation is very pleasant and convenient for the Purpose of Building.

What a strange difference in the state of things does this account of a fatal accident reveal :—

February 2, 1789.—On Thursday night last, Mr. Wright, patten maker of Digbeth, in this Town, attempting to cross the small bridge over Deritend Brook, opposite Messrs. Humphreys' * warehouse, unfortunately fell into the Brook, and though the water was but low, yet as he was aged and infirm, and no assistance being nigh, he was incapable of getting out, and was found dead in the mud the next morning. As several persons have fell over this bridge in the night, we hope some kind of railing will be immediately erected on its sides, or other means adopted to prevent similar accidents.

There are people living who remember when such an accident as this was possible at the moat :—

June 22, 1789.—Yesterday morning, a man driving a one-horse chaise round the Moat, in this Town, and going too near the edge of the water, the ground gave way, when the chaise, man, and horse were all overturned into the moat. It was with great difficulty that either the man or the horse were saved ; and as people are frequently falling into

* Mr. George Humphreys built the large house opposite the Angel at Sparkbrook, which was sacked at the Riots of 1791.

this water, it now becomes absolutely necessary that the rotten bank should be repaired, and some kind of railing erected.

The next advertisement will recall to the memory of many the once famous Apollo Tavern, Moseley-Street.

April 5, 1790.—Apollo Tavern, Deritend.—John Perkes returns Thanks to his Friends and the Public for their past Favours conferred on him at the Lamp, in Smallbrook-street, and informs them, he has lately taken the Apollo Tavern, situate in Moseley Street, Deritend, where he has laid in a good Assortment of Wines and Liquors of all Sorts, and of the best Qualities.—The Bowling Green, likewise, is much improved, and in excellent Condition, which he purposes opening This Day, and hopes those Gentlemen who have hitherto countenanced it with their Support will still continue their Favours, as he assures them every Attention will be given to render their Accommodations as agreeable as possible.

He likewise wishes to inform Gentlemen, Farmers, and others, that he has good Stabling for upwards of twenty Horses, and conveniently situated for the Coventry, Warwick, and Alcester Roads, and but a short Distance from the Market, besides a Saving of the Toll, and the Disagreeableness of riding over the Stones. A good Ordinary will be provided every Market Day, and he is determined to spare no Pains to accommodate them in the best Manner.

On April 12, the Summer Hill Estate was announced as having been staked out “for a range of elegant and uniform building, comprising fifteen houses, along the declivity of the beautiful hill.” And thus, year by year, almost month by month, the growing town extended its arms and embraced some additional part of the country.

We all know the Smithfield of the present day. Where the House of the Birminghams stood surrounded by its defensive and dangerous moat, are our cattle, our horse, and hay markets. The neighbourhood is thronged with a busy and energetic people, whose incessant traffic renders the idea of a blade of grass growing there wilder than the wildest fancy of the poet. And yet not quite eighty years back this was true of the place :—

Birmingham, April 11, 1791.

GRASS.

THE MEADOWS, near the Moat, commonly called Bagnes Meadows, are opened on this Day for the Purpose of taking in Horses and Cows. Apply at the George Inn.

The town is now about to lose the Heath fields, the origin of Heath Mill Lane. Bit by bit the country is being absorbed, and the fields cut up into streets and built upon. It will be seen by the next advertisement, that even at this period in our history Aston could boast of the smallness of its levies :—

September 19, 1791.—Land set out for Building upon.—Mr. John Cooper, the Proprietor of the Heath Fields, lying near to a certain Mill, called Cooper's Mill, having cancelled the Lease granted by him to the late John Meredith, deceased, and finally settled with his Executor, hereby gives Notice to the Public that he is ready to treat with any Person or Persons desirous to build on such Lands, either to sell the same in small Parcels, and convey the same in Fee Simple, or to convey the same in Fee Simple, subject to an annual Rent, payable for ever; or to Lease the same for 120 years, subject to an annual Ground Rent. By the two first Modes, each Person will have an absolute Freehold in the Spot he takes, either with or without Rent, at his Option; and by the latter Mode, will only be accountable for his own annual Ground Rent, which would not have been the case had he taken Land under the Lease granted to the late Mr. Meredith, until sufficient Building had been erected to have secured the Rent stipulated to be paid by such Lease. The Situation of this Land, owing to its Vicinity to Birmingham, is exceedingly eligible to build upon; and as the whole lies in the Parish of Aston, there will be a considerable Saving in Levies, which are much lower than in the Parish of Birmingham; besides, there is a most excellent Bed of Clay under all the Land.

Further Particulars may be known by applying to Mr. Gem, in New Street, Birmingham, where a Plan of the Lands and the Streets intended to be laid out may be seen.

It will be seen by the many examples given that the activity of the town was very great, and that greater changes were made in the appearance of the place during the ten years from 1781 to 1791 than in the forty preceding. These were ten years of great prosperity to Birmingham, but it was a prosperity destined to be succeeded by years of gloom, bitter suffering, deep despondency, bankruptcy, and general ruin. The nation was soon to be tried to its utmost, and both in suffering and patriotism our own town bore a sad but not ignoble part.

§ 2. PUBLIC LIFE AND EVENTS.

We record the public events of this decade with mingled feelings of pride and shame. Of pride at the many good works which were begun, and at the immense public activity which distinguished it—of shame that it is disgraced by that fierce outburst of fanaticism and bigotry, the Birmingham Riots. The ten years upon which we are now engaged were crowded with important local events, and the riots themselves may be traced to the same energy which, well directed, was producing such extraordinary results. We shall treat of that disgraceful display of religious and political madness in a separate chapter, and so leave it now for more pleasant and encouraging events.

Amongst the many which we shall have to record we may mention, as the more notable labours of the people during these ten years, the formation of Sunday Schools, the Opposition to the Slave Trade, the agitation on the subject of the taxation of small tenements, and the first hint of the claims of Birmingham to direct representation in the House of Commons. The extracts which we have to make will show how intensely earnest was the Birmingham of this period. The first notice we meet with in 1782 is one calling a meeting for increasing the canal communications with other towns :—

January 7, 1782.—The Gentlemen and Tradesmen of the Town of Birmingham and its Environs, who are desirous of encouraging the Scheme now in Agitation for making a Navigable Canal from the Collieries at Wednesbury to the Lower Part of the Town of Birmingham, and from thence to Atherstone, are requested (previous to a General Meeting) to attend at the Swan Inn, in Birmingham, To-Morrow, the 8th Day of January Instant, at Three o’Clock in the Afternoon ;—when and where the Plan of a late and improved Survey will be produced for their approbation.

The project was approved, and the work begun in a true Birmingham spirit, for on the 4th of February we read :—

A Petition was presented to the House of Commons on Monday last, for Leave to bring in a Bill to make and maintain a navigable Shaft or Canal from Wednesbury to Birmingham, and from thence to join the Coventry Canal at Fazeley. And we are informed, that since the Subscription for carrying the same into execution was closed, Sums to a very large Amount have been offered.

In this year the tradesmen agitated for an act to “promote and encourage short credit, by allowing debts to bear interest under certain restrictions.”

The maintenance of the poor troubled and perplexed our forefathers as it is now troubling and perplexing us. The continual increase of the poor rates was a constant source of alarm, and the complaints on this subject are not like angels’ visits—few and far between. The following reads very like a letter of a modern guardian :—

May 6, 1782.—To the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham.—The very great Complaints that are made of the Magnitude and encreasing Expense of the Poor’s and other Parochial Rates in the Parish of Birmingham, is well known and felt by every House-holder ; the Expenditure last Year amounted, at least, to the enormous sum of Sixteen Thousand Pounds, and the Expenses of the present Year, without a considerable Reform takes place, will amount to considerably more.

I presume there is no Person that pays to the Rates, but must acknowledge the utmost Care ought to be taken in the Distribution of the Public Money by the Officers, and that

a fair and equal Rate ought to be made upon every Person liable to pay them ; whether that is done or not, the List of Persons rated and not rated, lately distributed by Order of the Overseers, will clearly prove.

The greatest Part of the above-mentioned Sum was expended by the Overseers of the Poor ; who employed Two Persons, and paid them a Salary of One Hundred Guineas a Year out of the Town's Money, to collect the Rates for them, and the same Persons are continued by the present Overseers upon the same terms ; the Inhabitants have therefore a Right to expect the Collection to be made impartially, and with the greatest Dispatch.

I am informed, the Overseers of the Poor intend to call for a Second Levy this Week. I would therefore recommend to the Inhabitants to attend the Meeting, and enquire, how much of the First Levy has been collected, how much expended, and if any considerable sums remain unpaid ; to know why the Collectors have not received it, as it appears to be necessary the former Levy should be collected as close as possible, before another is granted, especially as the Collectors are paid a very considerable Salary to collect the rates.

I do not wish to encourage any Measures to give the Officers more Trouble than the Welfare of the Inhabitants requires ; but when the expenses are so very great, to be universally complained of, it then becomes necessary to invite the Inhabitants to take such steps as may, if possible, reduce the Payments, and put every person that pays upon as equal a Footing as possible.

"The Expenses of the Parish have increased, are increasing, and ought to be diminished."—Birmingham, May 6, 1782. An Inhabitant.

N.B. There are more Houses unrated to the Poor in Birmingham, than there are Houses in the Town of Manchester.

In May the town was rejoicing at the victory of Admiral Rodney over the French, off the islands of Dominica and Guadaloupe, in the West Indies :—

May 27, 1782.—On Monday last, in consequence of the Arrival of the News of the Signal Victory obtained by Admiral Rodney, in the West-Indies, over the Fleet of France, commanded by the Comte de Grasse, the Bells rang incessantly that whole Day and part of the preceding Evening. At Night a general Illumination prevailed throughout the Town ; and in many of the Streets, the great joy of the Inhabitants was particularly testified by the additional blaze of large Bonfires. Wolverhampton, Stourbridge, Dudley, &c., and several of the neighbouring Towns, likewise lighted up their Windows upon this most joyful occasion.

On the same day that we read this celebration of a "most joyful occasion," we have a record of a very different kind of work :—

May 27, 1782.—A Subscription, we hear, is set on Foot, in this Town and Neighbourhood, towards the finishing of Moseley Chapel. It is sincerely wished that, by a laudable Contribution, the Work may be completed in a short Time, there having been no Divine Service at that Place for the Four Years past.

Here is an entry of a work which never got beyond the region of good intentions :—

June 17, 1782.—We are informed that at a General Meeting of the Proprietors of the Birmingham Canal Navigation on Friday last, the 14th Instant, it was resolved unanimously, in consequence of the Powers they are invested with by the present Act of Parliament, immediately to extend their Canal to Deritend, the proper Levels for that purpose having been already taken.

In this year was organised a plan to provide a corps of Volunteers. A meeting was held and rules were adopted. The corps was called the Birmingham Independent Volunteers. The following selections from the rules are interesting :—

August 12, 1782.—II. That, as the Principles on which the Birmingham Independent Volunteer Corps associate place the Members on a perfect Equality each with the other, no distinction whatever shall be admitted, but such as may be absolutely necessary for the Purposes of good Order and Discipline, except Field Officers, who shall be chosen by the Majority of the Corps, and be Gentlemen of Family and Property, who shall always be upon the Committee, and entitled to a Vote on every occasion.

III. That every Member shall provide for himself a Steel-mounted Hanger, a sufficient proved Fusee to the Standard, provided with Bayonet and Cartouch Box ; the Fusee having a Black Sling, black Cross Belt ; upon the Pouch shall be a Circular Ornament of yellow Metal, containing the Arms of Birmingham, and upon the top of the Plate, on the cross Belt, the Initials B.I.V. Cyphered, and, below, the Initials of the Owner, with or without his Crest.

IV. The Uniform to be a Military Blue, lapelled with the same, gilt Buttons, Buff Cashmere Waistcoat and Breeches, white Stockings, cocked Hat, gold Button and Loop, black Cockade and black gaiters, all which he shall provide for himself.

The peace of the town was threatened in October by a party of Colliers. The judicious steps taken by the authorities were successful in averting such a calamity. The report of this event affords a curious picture of the times :—

October 21, 1782.—On Thursday a Party of Colliers, on their Way for this Town, came through Wednesbury, where they made a stand in a Part called High-Bullen, and were immediately waited upon by some of the Maltsters and principal Gentlemen of the Town. Being asked what their Intentions were by going together in that manner? they answered, to reduce the Price of Flour and Malt, as it was not in their Power to maintain themselves and Families whilst it was bought at such an exorbitant Price. The Maltsters promised to reduce the Price of Malt, providing they would go Peacefully out of the Town, which they directly did, accompanied by the Gentlemen of the Place, when Malt was immediately lowered from seven to six shillings the Bushel.—They arrived here about four o'clock in the Afternoon, and were met in the Bull-Ring by one of the Officers of the Town, who desired to speak with their Leader, who immediately appeared. He demanded of him, what he and his Party meant in coming into the Town in that hostile Manner? and was answered, They did not come with the intention of committing any Depredations, but to regulate the Prices of Malt, Flour, Butter, Cheese, &c.—The Gentleman promised them, if they would immediately go out of the Town peaceably, and commit no Outrage,

that he would do every Thing in his power to have the Prices of the different articles they complained of properly regulated, and lowered as much as the times would admit of; which they agreed to, on his signing a Paper that he would faithfully fulfil his promise.—He then conducted them a little way out of the Town.—In the mean Time, the Gentlemen of the Association, under the Command of Captain Beecroft, with the Military were drawn up in the Square, and sent a Message to the Officers of the Town, that they were ready to march to their Assistance.—They returned them a polite answer; and to convince these daring Invaders that there was a then sufficient Force in this Place, if the Civil Power had required more vigorous Measures to disperse them, they readily concurred in coming forward.—They accordingly paraded the different Streets, with Drums beating, &c., making a very respectable appearance.

At a very numerous and respectable Meeting of the Officers, and other Inhabitants of the Town, held last Saturday, at the Castle Inn, to take into Consideration the Prices of the several under-mentioned Articles, many of the principal Retailers thereof having also attended;—it was unanimously resolved to recommend to them to sell Household Bread, $8\frac{1}{2}$ Pounds for 1s.—Malt, per Bushel, 5s. 6d.—Cheese per Pound, if whole $3\frac{1}{4}$ d., if cut $3\frac{1}{2}$ d., Old, 4d. At the said Meeting a Number of the Principal Inhabitants, to the Amount of one Hundred and forty, stepped forward (which reflects great Honour upon them, for their spirited Conduct), and were properly qualified by the Magistrates of the Town, to act upon all Emergencies when called upon.

We have frequently had to notice the generous efforts which the well-to-do people of this town always made to relieve the distress of their less fortunate fellow townsmen. In his song on the Birmingham Overseers, Freeth tells us that no place was more renowned for its “Decent care of the poor.” The present year was remarkable for great distress, and with their wonted energy and benevolence the inhabitants commenced the work of relief. On November 18, we read in the *Gazette* :—

We have the Pleasure to inform the Inhabitants of this Town, that several humane and public-spirited Gentlemen have set on Foot a Subscription for raising a Sum of Money, to purchase Flour, Malt, &c., and dispose of it again, at a reduced Price, to the industrious poor Inhabitants.—A Meeting is appointed to be held at the Shakespear's Tavern Tomorrow afternoon at Three o'Clock, to carry this Laudable Scheme further into Execution; when it is hoped, that the Gentlemen of this Place will manifest the same humane and liberal Spirit on this, as they have formerly done on similar occasions.

This meeting was held, and adjourned until the 26th. Its object and result are stated in the following notice :—

December 2, 1782.—Tuesday last a meeting was held at the Shakespeare Tavern, pursuant to Advertisement in this Paper, to take into Consideration the probable Distresses that may be prevented, during the Winter, among the lower Class of People, by a timely Purchase of those Articles which are likely to become scarce or extremely dear, when a liberal Subscription was entered into, effectually to carry so beneficent a Purpose into Execution; and as the Meeting was not so numerous as might reasonably be

expected, in so considerable and opulent a Town, several Gentlemen undertook the cause of the Poor, by a Personal Application, and have already collected upwards of Eight Hundred and six Pounds.

On December 23 the editor was "happy to inform the public that by the liberal subscriptions raised in this town, the poor house-keepers will be enabled for sixteen weeks ensuing to purchase nearly six pounds weight of bread for sixpence." That is at one-third less than its retail price. In less than three weeks over £1,300 were subscribed. The bakers who thought it worth their while to supply the Committee appointed to relieve the Distresses of the Poor with Household Bread, in Nine-penny Loaves, were desired to send written Proposals, to be left at the Shakespear Tavern, by a specified time, and were informed that the weight of the loaf must be mentioned in the proposal. The subscribers to the fund were also requested to send a written List of the Poor Objects they mean to recommend, for the first Fourteen Days, to the Committee. The following was the Form of Ticket :—

A NINE-PENNY LOAF FOR SIXPENCE.


I recommend *Jonathan Johnson*, of *Duke's Court, Prince's-street*, who says he is not recommended by any other Subscriber.

TIMOTHY JONES.

This distress led to a general consideration of the condition of the poor of the town, and on the last day of the year, 1782, the following pamphlet was published :—

The present Situation of the Town of Birmingham respecting the Poor considered; with a Proposal for Building a New Workhouse. Addressed to the Inhabitants, By the Overseers of the Poor.

Printed by Pearson and Rollason.

 Persons desirous of perusing the above may be supplied by sending to the Workhouse.

The practical character of the people will be seen in the fact that a public meeting was almost immediately held on the subject, of which the following is the report :—

Public Office.—Dale-End, January 14, 1783.—At a MEETING held here THIS DAY, pursuant to Notice given in the Churches, and also by Advertisement in this Paper, for the Purpose of consulting with the Overseers of the Poor on the Propriety of building a new Workhouse, it was resolved *nem. con.*—

THAT it appears necessary to erect a New Workhouse, for the better Reception and Employment of the Poor of this Parish.

Resolved, That a Petition be presented to Parliament, for Leave to bring in a Bill to enable the Overseers to borrow a sufficient Sum for that Purpose.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to assist the Overseers in preparing the said Bill; and that when it is so prepared, it be laid before a future Town's Meeting, to be called for that Purpose.

A Committee was then appointed, with a Power of adding to it, as they shall see necessary.

Resolved, That no Time be lost in procuring Plans and Estimates that the Building may be forwarded with all Speed; and that application be made to the Lady of the Manor and the Freeholders for a Lease of as much waste Land as may be necessary for that Purpose.

Resolved, That in the proposed Bill a Clause be inserted, to appoint and empower the Committee to assist the Overseers in future; and that the Overseers as they go out of Office be added to the Committee, in order to supply the Vacancies that may fall out.

Ordered, That the Proceedings of this Meeting be advertised in both the Birmingham Newspapers.

Birmingham had as yet made no efforts to become a borough. She seems to have been contented with being absorbed in the county representation, and had no desire for parliamentary honours. This, however, would come when the "time was ripe." It is curious to notice that the first allusion to the subject which we meet with in the *Gazette* comes from a stranger. On January 13, 1783, this preliminary, but scarcely-regarded note of the greatest contest in which Birmingham was destined to be engaged was published:—

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman at St. Edmund's Bury to a Friend in this Town:—dated January 9, 1783. "What are you about, that I do not see any Account of your having met to petition Parliament for a Representation? You will see a Bury Petition in the Papers by the Time you get this, or before. If such a place as Birmingham, of above 40,000 Inhabitants, and so often justly noticed in the House as having high Claims to a Representation, should basely desert their own and the common Cause, at this Juncture, I think they will prove themselves some of the worst enemies of Freedom, and the greatest Promoters of Arbitrary Government in the Kingdom. Birmingham, Manchester, &c., having been so much noticed, will now prove themselves, either some of the most useful Friends to Human Rights, or, very great Enemies to them indeed; for should you be quiet, it will be made a bad use of against any Alteration."

The trade and commercial activity of this period was very great. The Soho was in the height of its prosperity, and such men as Boulton, Galton, Garbet, Villers, Turner, and other captains of industry were engaged in those experiments which have altered the entire aspect of trade, and led to results scarcely anticipated by the most enthusiastic and sanguine amongst them. The following extracts explain themselves:—

June 9, 1783.—Brass-Maker's Petition.—The Committee appointed by a Town's Meeting, held at the HOTEL on the 17th Day of February last, to conduct the intended

Opposition to the Brass-maker's petition, for the Repeal of the present Laws prohibiting the exportation of Brass ; do hereby appoint a General Meeting of the Merchants and Manufacturers of this Town, who are interested in this Business, at the Hotel, THIS DAY, PRECISELY at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, in order to receive their report, and to determine on the Propriety of a Petition to Parliament, against the intended Repeal Bill.

June 23, 1783.—The Brass Exportation Bill (after the Petitions against which were read, and Counsel heard,) was read a second Time in the House of Commons last Friday.

June 14, 1783.—The Merchants and Manufacturers of this Town, are desired to meet TO-MORROW, at the HOTEL, at Four o'Clock in the Afternoon, to receive the Report of the Committee, who were appointed to take the Charge of preventing a Repeal of the Laws which prohibit the exportation of BRASS, and to take into Consideration other Things of *great Importance* to the Trade of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham.

The new poor Act was obtained, and on July 14 the inhabitants were summoned to elect the Guardians :—

Notice is hereby given, That a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the said Parish, who shall be qualified as the said Act directs, will be held for the Purpose of electing such One Hundred and Eight Persons to be Guardians of the Poor of the said Parish of Birmingham, for putting the said Act in Execution, at the Place called the Public Office, situate in Dale End, in Birmingham aforesaid, at Nine o'Clock in the Morning of TUESDAY the 15th Day of July Instant, being the Third Tuesday after the passing of the said Act, as by the said Act is directed.

This period was unfortunately an age of enclosures. Looking over the Journals of the House of Commons of this time we are astonished at the entries of acts, or of applications for acts of enclosure. This desire had spread to Birmingham. Efforts had been previously made to enclose Sutton Coldfield, Handsworth, and other neighbouring places. On July 21, 1783, the subject was brought nearer home. On that day we find this announcement :—

A Proposal having been made to the LADIES of the MANOR of BIRMINGHAM for enclosing BIRMINGHAM HEATH :—Notice is hereby given, That a Meeting is appointed to be held at the Hotel in Birmingham, on Tuesday the 29th Day of July Instant, at Twelve o'Clock in the Forenoon, to Consider of such Proposals, and of proper Terms to carry the same into Execution ; at which Time and Place all Persons concerned are desired to attend.

WILLIAM HUNT,

Agent for the Ladies of the Manor of Birmingham.

The Commercial part of the Community had now begun to see the importance of organization. A meeting was held on the 15th of July, at which a committee was appointed to prepare " Proposals for the Establishment and Regulations of a *General Commercial Committee*, in order to lay the same before the Town, at a future Meeting." The

second meeting was called for the 12th of August, and the objects proposed by the committee will be gathered from the resolutions which were passed :—

Birmingham Hotel, Aug. 12, 1783.—At a Town's Meeting held here, this Day, pursuant to the public Request of the Committee appointed to prepare proposals for the Establishment and Regulation of a General Commercial Committee,

SAM. GARBETT, ESQ. in the Chair.

The following Resolutions passed unanimously, viz. :—

Resolved, That the Sketch produced by the Committee appointed at a public Meeting on the 15th of July last to prepare proposals for the Establishment of a General Commercial Committee has the unanimous Approbation of this Meeting.

Resolved, that it is the Sense of this Meeting that it is highly expedient to establish a standing General Commercial Committee for the purpose of watching over and conducting the public Interest of this Town and Neighbourhood.

Resolved, That a Number of Persons, not less than Sixty, nor more than One Hundred, be now chosen for the Purpose of forming this Committee, who, from their Election, shall be considered as a public Body established for the Purposes above-mentioned, and that all future Applications to Parliament, or to Administrations for public purposes, be intrusted to them.

Resolved, That this Committee shall not decide upon any Proposals that may be made to them, but at a Meeting called by public Advertisement in the Birmingham Newspapers, to be signed at least by five of their Body, in which the Business intended for the consideration of such Meeting shall be expressly mentioned; except in cases of real Emergency, admitted to be such by seven Members of the Committee, who shall in that Case be empowered to sign an Order to the Secretary for immediately summoning the whole Committee to a special Meeting.

Resolved, That at all Meetings, whether public or special, seven Members shall form a board, and be empowered to Act in the Name of the Whole; but no meeting shall be held for any Business whatever without the Whole of the Committee being regularly summoned to it.

Resolved, That the Committee shall keep an exact Register of all their Proceedings in a Book set apart for that Purpose, to which every Member of the Committee shall have free Access, and which shall be produced at the Public Meeting whenever the Committee shall find it necessary to call the Town together.

Resolved, That if any of the Gentlemen nominated shall decline to Act, the Committee shall have power to elect others in their stead; and whenever the Number of the Committee be reduced to Fifty, by Deaths or Removals, the surviving Members are hereby authorised to fill up the Vacancies to a Number not less than Sixty, nor more than One Hundred.

Resolved, That it is understood the Committee are to make Bye Laws for their own Government and Regulation in future. And Resolved, That it be and hereby is expressly enjoined upon them to correspond with any Commercial Committees, that are or may be established in any other Commercial Cities or Towns in the Kingdom,—and in particular that they receive and encourage a Coincidence and Connexion with the Towns of Wolverhampton, Walsall, and Dudley and their Neighbourhood.

Resolved, That the list of Names now produced by the Committee and filled up by this Meeting, to the number of One Hundred Persons, be adopted ; and that the Gentlemen therein nominated be, and hereby are, duly elected Members of the General Commercial Committee.

Resolved, That the Proceedings of this public Meeting be inserted in both the Birmingham Newspapers.

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman for the very Able and Candid Manner in which he has conducted the important Business of the Day.

(Signed)

SAM. GARBETT.

Although not a borough returning a member to Parliament, we have repeated proof that the Birmingham men of old, like their descendants now, took great interest in politics. We shall see hereafter the intense interest with which they celebrated the famous Revolution of 1688, and we all know how terribly their passions were inflamed on the subject of the still more famous French Revolution of 1789. The existing Parliament was about to be dissolved, and the Birmingham people met to pronounce on the subject of the next representatives for the County :—

December 22, 1783.—WHEREAS the Dissolution of the present Parliament appears to be a Measure fully concluded upon, the principal Inhabitants of the Town are desired to meet at the HOTEL, To-MORROW, the 23rd Instant, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, to consider of proper Measures for maintaining the present Harmony, and testifying, upon this Occasion, the grateful Attachment of the Town towards our present worthy representatives.

WILLIAM WARD, High Bailif.

Birmingham, December 22, 1783.

The “present worthy representatives,” were Sir Robert Lawley, and Sir George Shuckburgh, Barts. The same paper which contains this advertisement, also contains the conclusions of a Committee appointed to consider the question of how to deal with poor children. This is what was devised :—

December 22, 1783.—WHEREAS, by the Report of the Committee appointed to examine into the number and state of the Infant Poor, it appears, That there are now in the Workhouse 65 BOYS and 108 GIRLS, between the Ages of Seven and Fifteen Years, healthy and fit to be placed out Apprentice ; and the present Committee of Guardians, thinking it expedient that such BOYS and GIRLS should be placed out accordingly, on the Eighth Day of December instant came to a Resolution to carry the same into execution in the following Mode, viz. :—

That the Names of all the Inhabitants of this Town and Parish, who Rent TEN POUNDS per Annum, or upwards, and of such others who shall be thought of sufficient ability by the Magistrates and Guardians, shall be written upon separate Pieces of Paper, and put Promiscuously into a Box to be kept for that purpose ; and that as often as it shall be necessary to place out Apprentice any poor Children belonging to the said Parish, so many Names of Inhabitants as there shall be Children to Place out, shall be

drawn from the Box ; and that the Persons, whose Names shall be so drawn, shall, if the Magistrates and Guardians think them fitting, be compelled* to take such Children as Apprentices, or to find a Substitute, to be approved of by the said Magistrates and Guardians. That the Inhabitant whose Name shall be first drawn shall have the first Choice of a Child, and so on, Priority of Ballot to constitute Priority of Choice ; but that no Inhabitant who shall Voluntarily take Apprentice any Child from the Parish shall be compelled to take one by Ballot.

A new mail was added this year to the ever-increasing means of intercommunication.

Birmingham, December 29, 1783.—The Postmasters General have ordered a Mail to be dispatched from Birmingham, after the fifth of January next, through Bromsgrove, and Droitwich to Worcester, every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday in the Morning early, and to return at night. The Letters for these Places and the Cross-Road to be put into the Office before Ten o'Clock the preceding Night. Letters from Worcester will be received through Kidderminster as usual on Monday Nights. The Postage that way Three-pence, but through Bromsgrove only Two-pence.

Here is a curious illustration of the spirit of the times. We shall frequently meet this foreign emissary, and see the trouble he gave the manufacturers, and the vain efforts they made to catch him :—

February 2, 1784.—To the Birmingham Manufacturers.—As many Emissaries from Abroad are at this Time actually amongst you, as well as in other Parts of the Kingdom, with Views to entice your Workmen, and to rob you of your newest and most important Inventions, it is hoped that by this timely Caution, their Attempts may be Frustrated.

The Commercial Committee were exceedingly busy during this year. Here is a report of a meeting held in February :—

Birmingham, Monday, February 16th, 1784.—On Tuesday Morning last a Meeting of the principal Inhabitants of the Town, called by the Commercial Committee, was held at the Hotel, for the Purpose of considering of an Address to his Majesty. S. Garbett, Esq., being solicited to take the Chair, the Business of the Day was opened by the following Motion, viz., "That the Sense of this Meeting be taken, respecting the Propriety of an Address ;" which being seconded, it was resolved, after a Debate of some Length, by a Majority of 98 to 29, "That it was proper to address the King."—In Consequence of this Resolution, a Committee of seven Gentlemen were immediately appointed to withdraw and prepare an Address, which, upon their Return, being read by the Chairman, was, after a Trifling Alteration had been made in the Title, adopted by the Meeting. The Numbers, when the Question was put, who approved of the Address being 101.—In disapprobation of it 4.—After the Thanks of the Meeting were voted to the Commercial Committee, an Adjournment took place, in order to allow Time for a fair and proper Transcript of the Address for Signature. The Meeting was resumed in the Afternoon, when the Thanks of it were unanimously given to the Chairman, for his Candour and Impartiality in conducting the Business of the Day. The Address remained at

* We wonder what the ratepayers of the present day would think of this compulsory method of apprenticing poor children ! The liberty of the subject was not the primary consideration of this very practical committee.

the Hotel, for the Signatures of the Inhabitants, until Saturday Evening, when it was sent to London, to be presented to his Majesty, by Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Barts., Knights of the Shire, who have both expressed a great Readiness to carry up the same to the Throne.

Nor did they refrain from politics. A meeting was called for April the second, to "consider what measures may be proper for them to adopt, in consequence of the Dissolution of Parliament." This advertisement is signed by the Executive Committee, whose names are worth preserving. They are as follows :—

Edward Palmer	Samuel Glover	George Humphreys
Henry Perkins	Samuel Garbett	John Rickards
William Welch	William Russell	John Startin
John Startin	Thomas Ingram	William Turner

The meeting thus called was adjourned until the 6th, but there is no report of the business done, and the resolutions which they passed. Perhaps this was unnecessary, as the county returned their old members, who on the 7th return their thanks for this renewal of the confidence of the electors.

In these days everything taxable was taxed. A rhymester of the time, however, ventured to propose a new tax :—

Lines proposing a New Tax.

'Tis something hard, that Ribbons, Hats, and Gauze,
Should be an object in our Country's cause ;
Trifles, methinks, not worth a Stateman's care,
The simple ornaments that Ladies wear.
Sure not on them they wou'd a Tax impose,
The thought is horrid, say our modern Beaux—
A lucky thought !—'faith I've on it hit,
Cou'd I've a word or two with Mr. Pitt—
The wealthy Bachelor's the only thing
The fittest person to support the King ;
He lives at large, and wallowing in his pelf,
Eats, drinks, and feels for nothing but himself.

The extent to which taxation was applied, and the kind of articles which came under the grip of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, can scarcely be imagined in these free-trade days. On August the second our active Commercial Committee call a meeting for the third to receive "an Account of some Particulars which have occurred in London, relative to the taxing of *Coal, Bricks, Candles, and Paper*, and to a Bill brought before Parliament by manufacturers of plated wares in Sheffield."

On the same day we have "*A Caution*.—On the regulation of the gold coin in 1774 many guineas deficient in weight were sent to America, as prompt payment. Several of these are travelling back again, and will make light gold more plentiful than it has been for some time past. There are also a number of counterfeit guineas in circulation, worth no more than ten pence each ; they are all in imitation of the coinage of the present year. It would, therefore, be prudent to weigh all of that date."

The Commercial Committee—the predecessor of our Chambers of Commerce—was especially active in the year 1785. On January 25 a meeting was held "to take into consideration many things of great importance to the manufacturers of this town and neighbourhood, upon which it is apprehended there is a necessity of immediately applying to the administration. And also to consider upon the expediency of encreasing the number of the Committee."

This first meeting was adjourned until February the first. In the meantime they took a step which perhaps affords us one of the most remarkable contrasts with our present mode of looking on such a subject that could be quoted. It was a crime to "seduce" any workman or employer to leave this country to work in foreign countries. How vividly the difference of the times is brought before us by such an advertisement as this :—

January 31, 1785.—A Reward.—The Commercial Committee do hereby offer a Reward of Fifty Guineas for such Intelligence as will convict any Person of having attempted to seduce a Manufacturer to leave this Town or Neighbourhood, to go to work in foreign Countries. The Reward to be paid on Conviction of the Offender. And the Committee have also determined to apply to the King's Ministers to out-law such British Subjects who do now, or may in future, work at their Trade in foreign States to the Prejudice of the Manufacturers of this Country.

The result of the deliberations of the meetings held on January 25, and February 1, is given in the following report :—

February 7, 1785.—Commercial, February 3, 1785.—The Commercial Committee did, at two public meetings, on Tuesday the 25th of last Month, and on Tuesday the 1st instant, Unanimously order the following entry on their Journal, and desired the same might be inserted in such newspapers as their Committee of Correspondence might think proper ; and that copies might be sent to the Knights of the Shire for the Counties of Warwick and Stafford, and to the other Noblemen and Members of Parliament, viz. :—

This Committee, having with anxiety observed the various methods devised to raise a public revenue in such a manner as materially to impede the improvement and extent of

manufactures designed both for home consumption and foreign markets ; it is therefore, with great pleasure that they observe, and do entirely concur in, the sentiments expressed in the resolutions published by the very respectable quarterly meeting of iron masters and others concerned in the making of iron in Great Britain, and of the manufacturers of iron in the several counties of Salop, Worcester, Stafford, and Warwick, held at Stourbridge in the county of Worcester, on the 7th of last month, viz. :—"That it is highly expedient for those who have the good of their country at heart, to express their sentiments freely on those commercial subjects on which its population and riches most essentially depend."

"That the population and riches of this kingdom essentially depend on its manufactures, and taxes laid upon them are impolitic."

"That property acquired by trade and manufactures is a fit object of taxation ; but not the manufactures themselves."

In concurrence with these sentiments, this Committee are unanimously of opinion,

1. That manufactures and commerce should only be considered as a means of acquiring that real property which is the proper object of taxation.

2. That property, while exposed to the extreme uncertainty which it is necessarily subject to, while engaged in manufacture and commerce, cannot be justly deemed substantial until it is withdrawn from those dangers.

3. That every tax on manufactures, or on the raw materials employed in them (whether imported from abroad or the produce of our own country) is impolitic, as it tends to depress or crush the ardour of invention, and those adventurous attempts after improvement and new discovery to which many of the British manufactures owe that superiority which they have attained. The operation of such taxes has been extremely prejudicial to many of our manufactures ; some of which they have greatly injured, and in other cases have frustrated important plans for new branches of manufactures.

4. That, in general, every excise law is irreconcilable with the freedom and secrecy every manufacturer has a natural right to demand, in his own workshops, and in the exercise of his business, and they subject him to numerous inconveniences, are an encouragement to smugglers, while they oppress the fair trader ; and that by the frequency of taking oaths, which it is the deponents' interest to falsify, they lessen the reverence for that sacred ceremony, and tend to sap the foundations of moral honesty.

5. That it is the opinion of this meeting, That a spirit of rivalling and supplanting our manufactures is now operating in various parts of Europe, to a degree truly alarming ; and that our present laws are found ineffectual for preventing our ingenious tools being exported, and our most expert and valuable workmen and artificers from being inveigled away, to other countries, where raw materials and other necessities for manufactures are exempted from duty.

6. That it is the opinion of this meeting, That the present times open a new era in the commercial world, and that many circumstances render it necessary not only to remove all taxes upon manufactures, but likewise to hold out every possible encouragement to commercial people to continue to hazard their property in trade.

7. That the impediments, difficulties, and various prohibitions our commerce meets with in almost every quarter of the globe, requires the early notice of the Administration, and that the public interest will very materially suffer, if speedy and effectual attention is not granted ; and as it is not probable that the gentlemen who devised the taxes were acquainted with these difficulties, or were sensible of the encouragement given to manu-

factures in foreign countries, or with the inducements that are continually offered (and with some success) to entice artists to leave this kingdom—it is therefore

Resolved, That in order, as far as in us lies, to counteract the opinion, which has long prevailed, that manufactures are proper objects of taxation, it is become necessary to correspond with the Commercial Committees and eminent Merchants and Manufacturers in different parts of the kingdom, in order to represent such particulars to Government, respecting exports to foreign countries, and to the manufactures which are established there, as may be thought most effectual for the protection of British Manufactures in general; and also to represent that mines of coal, iron, copper, tin, lead, calamine and clay, together with manufactures very much contribute to the rank this country bears among nations; and that it is essential for persons who are most intimately acquainted with all the connexions relative thereto, and most immediately interested in the prosperity of mines, manufactures and commerce, to form some mode of corresponding in order to remonstrate against injudicious taxes upon any article of export, and thereby to afford such information to Ministry as may be of great importance to our commerce with foreigners.

This resolution is recommended to the Committee of Correspondence, and also that they may take an opportunity of declaring in the most explicit terms that we would cheerfully pay any taxes upon our expenditure; but let them earnestly pray that we may not be impeded in the means by which we honestly and industriously enrich ourselves and our country and promote population.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

Another meeting was called for the 8th of the same month. This time the principal traders of the town and neighbourhood, as well as the merchants and manufacturers, met to express their sentiments upon commercial questions between this kingdom and Ireland. They were also called to deliberate upon other matters of great importance to this manufacturing country. Delegates were appointed at this meeting, and another was held on the 18th, at which this petition was adopted. It was presented to the House of Commons by Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., one of the members for this county.

“To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of the Commercial Committee and other Merchants and Manufacturers of the Town of Birmingham—Sheweth,

“That your Petitioners observe, by the votes of this Honourable House, that there are now under consideration certain Resolutions of the House of Lords and Commons of Ireland, which they understand are intended to form the basis of a lasting treaty of commerce between Great Britain and that kingdom.

“That your Petitioners humbly conceive that, if a treaty should be made on the terms held forth in those resolutions, it would prove highly detrimental to the Trade and Manufactures of Great Britain in general, and to those of this town and neighbourhood in particular.

“That unless some great alterations be made in the Revenue Laws of Great Britain and Ireland, Ireland may, more effectually than any other country, rival the manufacturers

of this kingdom ; and, that the duties which are laid in Ireland upon some of our manufactures operate as a bounty, and induce workmen to leave this kingdom and settle there ; and, that they have no doubt, but this emigration will much increase from this town and neighbourhood if the resolutions of the Irish Parliament should be confirmed in Great Britain, without essential alterations.

“That the apprehensions of your Petitioners would in some degree be removed, were all articles which are the natural growth, product, or manufacture of either country, to be imported into the other duty free, or, if a duty should be thought necessary were it to be laid in such a manner as to affect *ad valorem*, all articles which are the natural growth, product, or manufacture of either country, when imported into the other.

“That your Petitioners apprehend that part of the sixth resolution of the Parliament of Ireland, which states ‘that, in order to give permanency to the settlement now intended to be established, it is necessary no prohibition, or new, or additional duties should hereafter be imposed in either kingdom, on the importation of any article of the growth, product, or manufacture of the other,’ would, if adopted here, be effectual in answering this purpose. Was a clause to be inserted to abolish all duties now payable on the importation of articles, the natural growth, product, or manufacture of one country into the other, but without a clause to this purport, they apprehend this resolution to be totally inadmissible, because articles which are the natural growth, product or manufacture of this country, are charged with heavy duties when imported into Ireland ; while linen, which is the principal manufacture of Ireland, is imported into this country duty free.

“That your Petitioners apprehend that the duties on the importation of articles from foreign states, and on bar iron in particular, should be the same in both countries ; and as the duty on bar iron imported into this kingdom cannot be reduced without great injury to the making of it at home, which it is the particular interests of this country to encourage, that the duty on this article, as well as on all others, when imported into Ireland, should be equal to the duties in this kingdom.

“That your Petitioners have long hoped for a favourable opportunity to intreat this Hon. House to appoint a Committee to take the state of the Hardware Trade into consideration, as an object of national importance ; and it is, therefore, with great concern that they observe it is proposed that, in all future treaties with foreign states, an effectual preference shall be afforded to Irish Manufacturers, because linen may be bought by England much cheaper from other countries, and not only to be paid for by the labour of our people, but also occasion other commercial advantages to this country.

“That, upon the whole, your Petitioners being convinced of the many difficulties in which a commercial arrangement with Ireland is involved, and of the very great importance it must be of to both countries to have it settled on such a well digested plan, as may tend to increase the wealth, population, and happiness of both kingdoms, think it essentially necessary that more time should be allowed for mature consideration ; and though they have the highest opinion of the integrity and ability of the Minister who introduced this business, they conceive it to be their duty humbly to pray that the commercial treaty between this kingdom and Ireland may be left open till the next session of parliament ; or that this Honourable House will grant such other relief as to its wisdom shall seem meet.”

This active committee called another meeting for the first of April, “to receive the Report of their Delegate, now in London, and to con-

sider whether and in what Mode it may be advisable to write to the Knights of the Shire, in Support of the Petition already presented to Parliament, and to deliberate upon what public Notice it may be proper for the Meeting to take of any Taxes which affect Manufacturers; and how far it may be particularly expedient at this Time to represent to the King's Ministers the Difficulties which attend their Trade with Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, and Russia."

The objectionable measures passed the Commons, and were passed on to the Lords, but the Committee did not relax in their labours. At a meeting held June 7 a petition to the House of Lords was adopted. The following paper, containing the substance of this petition, was delivered to each Peer:—

It is humbly represented, That if a compact should be made between Great Britain and Ireland upon the Terms proposed by the resolutions of the House of Commons, it would prove highly detrimental to the trade and manufactures of Great Britain in general, and of this town and neighbourhood in particular.

That some of the revenue laws act as a great bounty to cause manufacturers to remove from Britain to Ireland, and have already had that effect in the Glass Trade: and unless material alterations are speedily adopted many people who manufacture other articles for exportation will probably emigrate from this neighbourhood.

That it is apprehended that the duties on all articles used for manufactures when imported from foreign states into Great Britain, and into Ireland, should be precisely the same; and that in particular, as the duty upon bar iron imported into this kingdom cannot be reduced without great injury to the making of it at home, which it is very much the interest of this country to encourage, that the duty on that article when imported into Ireland, should be equal to the duties paid upon it in this kingdom.

That the Birmingham Commercial Committee have long hoped for a favourable opportunity to entreat his Majesty's Ministers to take the state of the hardware trade into consideration, as an object of national importance; and, therefore, it is with great concern observed that it is proposed, as an unalterable condition, that the importation of articles from foreign countries should be regulated upon such terms as shall effectually favour the importation of linen from Ireland, although the same may be bought much cheaper from other countries, and may not only be bartered for by the labour of our people, but may also occasion other commercial advantages to this kingdom.

That from observations made by the Merchants and Manufacturers of this place, in the course of their transactions, there is reason to believe it is impossible for human prudence to foresee or obviate the many important and perplexing circumstances which may arise, in consequence of any unalterable regulations that can be settled for commercial contingencies; and it is humbly apprehended that the only expedient which can firmly and lastingly unite the interest of the two kingdoms in commercial matters, is a complete union of the two states.

That if the resolutions of the House of Commons, relative to a lasting treaty of commerce between Great Britain and Ireland, should pass into a law, contrary to the general sentiments of the manufacturing part of the nation, and of those who upon experimental knowledge of trade are most likely to foresee the effects, there is great reason to apprehend the consequence will be injurious to our commerce, and fatal to our internal peace.

Up to this time the mails had been conveyed by post-bags on horse-back. The early numbers of the *Gazette* are adorned with a rude wood engraving of a wooden looking boy, and a more wooden looking horse, with the letter bags flapping his sides. The boy is blowing the emblematical trumpet, and the horse is sweeping along his feet above the ground, and clouds of dust behind. This state of things was about to pass away, and mail coaches displace the mail lads. On Monday, July 4, 1785, we read this notice of the coming change :—

We hear that the new regulations for conveying more expeditiously the mails will begin the latter end of this month, or beginning of next, and that mail carriages are preparing to convey the mails from London through Oxford, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury, and along the new road through Oswestry, Llangollen, Corwen, and Llanrwst, to Holyhead ; which road, by avoiding the delay and danger of Conway Ferry, and being the shortest and best, will enable the proprietors of the Coaches to deliver the mail at Holyhead, with greater expedition, and more certainty, than can be done on any other road.

On August 22, the editor is “happy to inform the public that we understand the London mail will be brought to this town by the coach, for the first time, to-morrow.” The epigrammatic muse of the period was inspired with this :—

Mail Coaches, an Epigram.

The Mails from ambling now are found
With double speed to skim the ground ;
Through thick and thin they drive Gee Ho ;
And Palmer’s* new established mode,
Holds with the ancient proverb good,
“ ’Tis Money makes the Mare to go.”

Robberies had increased to such an extent that in this year the inhabitants formed night patrols for the protection of their persons and property. An association for the prosecution of felons, swindlers, &c., was established ; and all this work was done by the people themselves, and the expenses raised by voluntary subscription. Although not yet blessed with a Corporation, local self-government was well-understood

* This was the famous Major Palmer who devised the plan for conveying letters by mail coaches instead of by post-boys on horseback. It was thought wonderful to have a letter conveyed from London to Birmingham for nine-pence. Sir Rowland Hill’s penny postage reform, however, has thrown that of the worthy major in the shade ;—but then the latter had not steam to help him.

and practised by our fathers. The Commercial Committee opened the new year with fresh efforts for the benefit of trade. On the 13th of January, 1786, a meeting was held "to take into consideration the necessity of applying for an Amendment to the Act passed last Session, to prevent the Exportation of Tools, and of the Propriety of asking for the Introduction of a Specification of the several and particular sorts of Tools and Implements, which we have been accustomed to export (and which it is conceived we may continue to do) without Injury to this Country; likewise to confer upon a Specification of those also which it is thought prudent to prohibit. And to deliberate upon a Plan that will be laid before them to secure the Supporters of it with a constant Supply of Copper and Brass, upon as good Terms as the Nature of that Trade will permit; and thereby effectually prevent their being liable to the Effects of future Monopolies, and the great Inconveniencies which this neighbourhood has suffered from the want of such Security."

The fears and jealousies of trade are once more illustrated by the following advertisement :—

Jan. 23, 1786.—BIRMINGHAM MANUFACTURES.—The Manufacturers of Birmingham having suffered very great Inconveniencies, and other bad Consequences of the most serious kind, from shewing their Manufactures to Strangers.—They find themselves under the necessity of acquainting the Public, That they have therefore resolved not to admit any Strangers whatever into their Workshops in future; and hope no person will resent being refused a Favour, the granting of which has been found detrimental to this Town.—And FIFTY GUINEAS Reward will be given by the Commercial Committee for such Information as will convict any Person of offering to induce a Manufacturer in Hardware to leave this Town or Neighbourhood to work at his Trade upon the Continent of Europe.

That our readers may understand the terrible grievance of a debased coinage, we quote this paragraph :—

January 30, 1786.—The advantage taken by certain individuals of poor workmen in this place, loudly calls for the interference of the officers to put a stop to the circulation of counterfeit copper coin. On Saturday night last, a poor workman, who, upon an average does not get more than 9s. or 10s. per week, had halfpence to the amount of 5s. forced upon him, in part of his week's wages, which were not intrinsically worth more than 2s.

Our next quotation will be of great interest to all persons engaged in the brass trade. On January 31, a meeting, called by the Commercial Committee was held to examine a plan for securing a constant supply of Copper and Brass. It will be seen that the plan was devised by

that "Captain of Industry," Matthew Boulton. Other very important business was transacted at this meeting.

COPPER AND BRASS.

Birmingham Hotel, January 31st, 1786.—At a Meeting of the Commercial Committee, Consumers of Metal, and other Traders in this Town and Neighbourhood, a Report was delivered by Gentlemen who were appointed to examine the Plan Mr. Boulton had proposed, for securing the Supporters of it a constant supply of Copper, upon as good Terms as the Nature of the trade will permit; and by which it appears that a Capital of Thirty-six Thousand Pounds was necessary to establish that very important Object; and also that Twenty-four Thousand Pounds thereof should be possessed by Persons in this Neighbourhood. The Gentlemen present expressed an Inclination to engage therein, by signing their Names to advance Thirteen Thousand Three Hundred Pounds, provided, on further examination, the Plan appeared to their Satisfaction; and therefore it was

Resolved,—That the Report be left with Mr. Peel, at Mr. Boulton's Warehouse, at New-Hall,* until Tuesday next, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, that any Gentleman may have an Opportunity of perusing the same, and of adding his Name thereto for any Sum not less than One Hundred Pounds, and that there be a Meeting at this Place on Tuesday next, at Ten o'clock in the Forenoon, in order to consider upon settling Terms for general Satisfaction; after which Gentlemen may engage to advance, or decline advancing, the Sums they may have set opposite to their Names.—And the Chairman is desired to direct the Tenor of this Resolution to be published in both the Birmingham News-Papers.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

Birmingham Commercial Committee, January 31, 1786.—At a Meeting of the Commercial Committee, the Chairman was desired to publish in the Birmingham and some of the London News-Papers the following Extracts from the Minutes of their Meeting on the 3rd Instant.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

Mr. Garbett acquainted the Meeting that at the Request of the principal Exporters of the Manufactures of this Town, he had twice waited upon Mr. Pitt to represent some of the difficulties that had lately been put upon the Introduction of our Wares into France, Germany, Portugal, &c., and the means that had been adopted to procure various sorts of Tools for the use of Artists who had emigrated from this Country, to work at their Trades in Foreign States; that unless a Bounty was granted upon the Exportation of Iron wares, great part of that Trade would be lost to Britain; that the Duty laid upon Silver Wares would certainly deprive this town of a Manufacture which had a fair prospect of being considerable, and especially if we were allowed to work Silver of two of the same Standards as were used in Foreign Parts; and that he had very firmly declared to Mr. Pitt that introducing Excisemen into any Manufactures was a material, not to say the most effectual Bar to the Spirit of Improvement. He also acquainted the Meeting that Mr. Pitt not only heard him with great attention, but gave instant Proof of his Inclination to serve the Commercial Interests of the Community, and desired Mr. Garbett would assure the Merchants and Manufacturers of Birmingham that he should always be ready to attend to any representations they might lay before him, as he considered the Manufac-

* New Hall was sold on July 2nd, 1787, a year and a half after the date of this meeting. Did Mr. Boulton occupy the Hall as a warehouse? If so we can fix its precise situation. For in 1786, Boulton's place was at the corner of Lionel and Livery Streets, the premises now occupied by Messrs. F. Barnes and Co.

tures of our Country as Objects of great Magnitude, and that they were entitled to his best Endeavours for their Support.

Resolved, That this Committee have a grateful Sense of the favourable Attention with which the present Minister has been pleased to honour their Delegates, and which he has repeatedly given to their Applications upon various Matters of the highest consequence to some of the Commercial Interests of this Town and Neighbourhood.

Resolved, That it appears to this Committee that many Branches of the Trade in Town are in Danger of Suffering very materially by the Practice of admitting Strangers to a sight of them, and that it is necessary for the Manufacturers unanimously to determine not to admit any Stranger whatever into their Workshops in future.

Resolved, That this Meeting highly approves of the Institution of the General Chamber of Manufacturers established in London, and is sensible that it was undoubtedly owing to the Industry and Perseverance of the Members of that Chamber, in collecting and laying before Parliament so much authentic and decisive Information, that the Irish Propositions did not pass in their original Form, and after the Ruin was averted with which those Propositions threatened many important Branches of the Manufactures of this Nation, and that some Stop was put to the Extension of the Excise Laws, whose baneful Influence proved fatal to some of our valuable Manufactures, and hurtful in a very high degree to all those over which they extend; and it is the unanimous Opinion of this Meeting, that it would be a happy Circumstance for the Nation in general if the Remonstrances and Facts produced by the Members of that Chamber would induce the Legislature to revise all those Laws by which the Manufacturers are distressed, and to adopt such Measures as would protect and encourage many valuable Branches of Trade that will otherwise be lost to this Country.

Resolved, That, in the Opinion of this Meeting, the present Conjuncture of Affairs peculiarly demands the firm Union, the serious Attention, and the vigorous and judicious Exertions of the whole Body of British Manufacturers. For our Manufactures still continue Burthened, by a Load of Taxation, and its consequent Restraint at Home; while heavy Duties and Prohibitions now meet them in many parts of Europe, where we have formerly enjoyed a comparatively free Trade. Foreign Courts not only discourage the Sale of British Goods in their Dominions, but with the diligence and perseverance of private Tradesmen, endeavour to establish similar Manufactures in their respective Countries. To protect and preserve our Arts and Artists, and to avert and lessen the Dangers which in Numerous Shapes surround us, demands the Attention of every eminent Manufacturer; but it is only when acting in Conjunction with others, that he can expect his Grievances will be attended to. The voice of the whole will be heard, while the Complaint of Individuals, or the Clamours of the Manufacturers in a single Branch, would be disregarded. The Meeting, therefore, hopes that the General Chamber will receive from this Town that Support which so valuable an Institution merits, and which has been so liberally given to it by the Manufacturers of Manchester and other places. That as this Committee consider themselves Parties to the Institution of that Chamber, they stand pledged to contribute their Proportion of the Expenses incurred. That, therefore, a Deputation be now formed to Solicit a Contribution to be remitted to the Chamber of Manufacturers in London, at the discretion of this Committee, towards defraying the Past Expenses and lessening the Debt which that Chamber has incurred in supporting the Interests of Manufacturers, and that an Annual Subscription be likewise solicited for the future Support of the General

Chamber, at the discretion also of this Committee, and which this Meeting hopes their fellow Townsmen and Manufacturers will continue so long as the Proceedings of that Chamber are conducted on Principles truly Commercial, and its Measures preserved from all Party Influence.*

A deputation was accordingly formed, and liberal Subscriptions immediately made.

On October 2, the Rev. J. Riland published a "Plea on behalf of the Working People of this town, containing a proposal for erecting a house in the country for those of them who are threatened with that fatal disorder, the consumption; addressed to their masters, and all the gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood." This benevolent project was not sufficiently taken up.

This year was concluded the treaty of commerce with France, and our local laureate thus celebrates the event:—

October 9th, 1786.

FREEDOM'S FAIR GROUND.

A Song of the Treaty of Commerce.

Tune—"Lilies of France."

Ye Friends to Fair Freedom, and Sons of True Worth,
 Who love a few moments devoted to mirth;
 To Recompence make for the Toil of the Day,
 Allow it all must—there's a Time to be gay;
 That Time to embrace, in the evening resort,
 Give Pleasure the Meeting at Comus's Court;
 We meet to be joyous: what's Life without Cheer?
 And cheerful we will be, Care never comes here;
 The Earth teems with Plenty, profuse are her Smiles,
 Great Britain may still be the happiest of Isles;
 And whilst o'er the Ocean her Vessels shall go,
 Where Genius presides, Trade is certain to flow,
 The Prospect how pleasing—of Commerce I mean,
 When Eden returns from the Banks of the Seine;
 May Kingdom 'gainst Kingdom no more be at Spite,
 For both 'twere much better to trade than to fight;
 And whilst mutual Friendship and Harmony reign,
 Our Buttons we'll barter for Pipes of Champagne.
 Together—for why should Distinction be shown?
 The Merchant, the Tradesman, and Artist sit down;
 'Tis Fancy, bright Fancy—the main Spring of Trade,
 Makes Birmingham flourish; for this may be said
 Invention is boundless, on Freedom's Fair Ground,
 Its Equal is not in the World to be found.—BIRMINGHAM.

* The Commercial Committee have already by public Advertisement offered a Reward of Fifty Guineas upon Conviction of any Person attempting to induce a Manufacturer in Hardwares to leave the Kingdom, and work upon the Continent of Europe.

There is one parallel at least between the years 1867 and 1787. In both complaints are made of the unsatisfactory manner in which the public accounts were kept. The reformers of our system of book-keeping will look with interest upon the labours of their predecessors :—

February 19th, 1787.—Public Accounts.—The manner of passing the Accounts of the Public Officers of this Town being very dissatisfactory to many of the Inhabitants, and it having been suggested as proper that a Committee should be appointed for the Purpose of examining minutely every Public Account before it is passed, the Officers of the Town, who are very desirous of bringing forward so necessary a Measure, request a General Meeting of the Inhabitants at the Public Office, in Dale End, on Wednesday the 28th Day of this Month, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, to consider such Measure, and appoint a Committee for carrying the same into effect.—Birmingham, February 17, 1787.

The Manufacturers were opposed to the Commercial Treaty with France; the Commercial Committee supported it. The latter body in the most emphatic manner entered their protest against the proceedings of the former. This protest was published in a series of resolutions on April 2, 1787 :—

Commercial Committee, Birmingham, March 27, 1787.—At a Meeting of the Commercial Committee held at the Hotel, Matthew Boulton, Esq., in the Chair, Resolved unanimously, That, in the opinion of this Meeting the late Proceedings of the General Chamber of Manufacturers in presenting a Petition to Parliament, objecting to the Commercial Treaty with France, and in publishing sundry resolutions disapproving of the same, were highly injudicious.—That the said proceedings were in no Ways authorised by this Committee, nor by any Delegate from the Manufacturers of this Place.—That the Publication of the Debates in the General Chambers of Manufacturers was exceedingly impolitic, and likely to prove prejudicial to the Interests of this Country.—That the Dissensions which have prevailed in the General Chambers have tended to lessen the Respectability of that valuable Institution.—That, in the Opinion of this Meeting, the Constitution of the General Chambers should be new modelled, and such Regulations made as may tend to prevent such Conduct in future, and also to prevent improper Persons from being admitted Members of the Committee of that Chamber.—That, until such Regulations are adopted, this Committee will not send any delegate to the General Chamber, and do not consider the Manufacturers of this Town and Neighbourhood as in any Ways represented by that Chamber, as at present constituted.—That these Resolutions be published in the Birmingham Newspapers, and in two or three of the London Papers.—That the Secretary of this Committee be directed to send a Copy of these Resolutions to the Secretary of the General Chambers.

MATTHEW BOULTON, Chairman.

This year a brave and gallant gentleman paid us a visit, and the public gave him a hearty welcome :—

Sept. 3rd, 1787.—On Wednesday morning, the Right Hon. Lord Heathfield (more familiarly known as *General Elliot*), the brave and immortal defender of Gibraltar, came

to the Swan Inn, in this Town, from Oxford, where he had been the preceding day presented by the Mayor and Corporation with the freedom of that city, and received the most respectful attention from the heads of the University. As soon as his Lordship's arrival was known the bells were set a ringing; and the populace gathered round him with joyful acclamations, while he walked through the principal streets attended by some officers who are now quartered in the Town, and who had shared with him the fatigues and honours of garrison duty at Gibraltar. His Lordship, after viewing the Sword-blade manufactory of Mr. Harvey, likewise visited the manufactories of Mr. Clay, Mess. Smiths, Mr. Gimblett, and several others, and was pleased to express the highest satisfaction at the excellence to which they had all attained. His Lordship, taking a hasty dinner, departed in the afternoon, amidst the repeated acclamations of the populace, who followed him to the end of the town, for Staffordshire, in which County we understand he means to continue a short time.

The state of the King's health was now causing serious alarm, and the discussions on the Regency Bill were exciting the passions of the people in the highest degree. The great majority were with Mr. Pitt, and in Birmingham a meeting, called by the High Bailiff, was held on January 16, 1789, to "consider of an address of thanks to Mr. Pitt, the Members for the County, and the other Members of the House of Commons, who formed the Majority in the late agitated question of Right, respecting the Regency." The views of Mr. Pitt may be gathered from this brief report of his words to the House :—

January 19, 1789.—Mr. Pitt called upon the House to recollect that they had resolved no person had a *right* to the Regency during the King's incapacity, and he had not found in the history of our country an instance, from the reign of Henry III. to the latest period, in which that exercise of *all* the powers and prerogatives of the Crown had been vested in a Regent; though every one must wish, in the present case, to have him trusted with all those powers which were necessary to give his government due energy and vigour. He would propose "that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales should be empowered to take upon himself the government of the country with the title of REGENT, and exercise all the powers and prerogatives of the Crown, subject to such restrictions and limitations as should be provided."

The course adopted by the principal inhabitants of this town will be best gathered from the report of their meetings :—

HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM.

January 16, 1789.—At a numerous and respectable Meeting of the CLERGY, MERCHANTS, and principal INHABITANTS (convened by public Advertisements in the Birmingham Newspapers) to consider of an ADDRESS of THANKS to the Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT, to the two REPRESENTATIVES for this County, and the other MEMBERS of the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS, for their manly Support of the important constitutional RIGHT of the People of this Realm; to provide the Means of supplying the Defect of the personal Exercise of the Royal Authority, arising from his Majesty's unhappy Indisposition.

The Rev. CHARLES CURTIS, M.D.,

IN THE CHAIR.

The following RESOLUTIONS were agreed upon, viz :—

RESOLVED, (with only one dissenting Voice) That in the present calamitous Indisposition of our Royal Sovereign (an Event never to be sufficiently lamented) every Friend to the Interests of his King and Country must anxiously desire to see the most expedient and constitutional Means adopted to supply the Deficiency, thus unhappily occasioned, in the personal Exercise of those Powers which are vested in the Royal Branch of the Legislature.

As it appears to this Meeting that the Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT; Sir ROBERT LAWLEY, Bart., Sir G. SHUCKBURGH, Bart., Representatives for this County, and the two HUNDRED and SIXTY-FIVE other MEMBERS of the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS, with a truly patriotic Spirit, supported the RIGHT of the remaining Part of the Legislature to provide the Means of supplying the Defect.

RESOLVED (with only three dissenting Voices) That our hearty THANKS be given to the Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT, Sir ROBERT LAWLEY, Bart., Sir G. SHUCKBURGH, Bart., and the TWO HUNDRED and SIXTY-FIVE other MEMBERS of the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS for their noble Conduct on that important Occasion.

RESOLVED (with only three dissenting Voices) That these our RESOLUTIONS and THANKS be immediately sent to the Right Honourable WILLIAM PITT, to Sir ROBERT LAWLEY, Bart., and Sir G. SHUCKBURGH, Bart., and be further announced in the public Papers, in Testimony of our Gratitude to them and the TWO HUNDRED and SIXTY-FIVE other MEMBERS of the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS.

Resolved (with only three dissenting Voices) That the CHAIRMAN be requested to wait upon Sir G. SHUCKBURGH (as Sir ROBERT LAWLEY's ill-State of Health has obliged him to leave Town) and with him to present the foregoing RESOLUTIONS immediately to Mr. PITT.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

CHARLES CURTIS, Chairman.

February 9, 1789.—The following is the report of the presentation of the address :—

The CHAIRMAN, in consequence of the above RESOLUTIONS, went to London, and with Sir G. SHUCKBURGH, waited on Mr. PITT, who assured them of the great Satisfaction he felt, in the flattering Testimony of Approbation from so weighty and a respectable portion of the community as Birmingham, particularly on an occasion so important to the Rights of Parliament, and to the general welfare of the Country.

The CHAIRMAN is also happy to communicate to the Town of Birmingham, “the very grateful Sense Sir ROBERT LAWLEY and Sir G. SHUCKBURGH entertain of the very flattering Testimony of Approbation which they have been pleased to express of their parliamentary conduct in their Resolutions at the above Meeting.”

CHARLES CURTIS, Chairman.

Amid this political excitement the rich did not forget their duty to the poor, and on January 19, we read that :—

A Subscription was last week opened in this town to supply the poor with bread and coals at half price; and we have great pleasure in observing that, from the liberality of the inhabitants, the sum subscribed is already near £1000, although a considerable part

of the town has not yet been applied to; and we have reason to believe that it will receive an addition of several hundreds more in a few days, to the unspeakable joy of thousands who are destitute not only of the comforts, but also of the necessities of life.

The Regency question was not yet disposed of, and on February 23 this address was published :—

TO the INHABITANTS of BIRMINGHAM.—We have at last seen the Minister's plan for settling the Regency unfolded, and there is no doubt, from his majorities in the two Houses of Parliament, that it will be completed. It would now only tend to foment the dissensions that are already too much to be feared, to enter into any discussion concerning the expediency of the measures adopted; or whether the minister has, as his friends say, consulted merely the good of the nation; or, as his adversaries alledge, whether he has not sacrificed our ancient and venerable constitution to the ambition of himself and his party, and to his animosity against his successors.—Setting therefore aside these now useless controversies, it behoves the nation to consider what will be the direct consequence of this change that actually will take place in the Government, and what CONDUCT the PEOPLE ought now to pursue.

The executive Government is to be transferred from the King to the Prince of Wales, during his Majesty's incapacity, but under such restrictions and limitations that the power of the crown will be so diminished that it is to be feared that the executive Government may be too weak to secure tranquility at home, or command respect abroad. For it has ever been considered as an unquestionable principle in our excellent constitution, that each of the three estates, King, Lords, and Commons, should possess a sufficient degree of power and independency to control the ambition of the others, and maintain the just BALANCE or EQUILIBRIUM on which the excellence of our constitution depends. Now the experience of a century, since the Revolution in 1688, has proved, that the three have been as exactly balanced as human affairs admit. But if the power of the Crown has been hitherto but just sufficient for the purpose of a stable Government, it is evident that it must be INSUFFICIENT when restricted of some of its principal prerogatives, divested of the power of granting, for public services, the customary rewards, pecuniary and honorary, and stripped of the disposal of a great part of the civil list. which have always been considered as essential for the constitutional influence of the country.

Without enquiry whether these restrictions were not urged by a necessity greater than the obvious disadvantages, ought not the PEOPLE, in the weakened state of the executive Government, to endeavour to give some STABILITY to public measures by their COUNTEenance and support. And who is better entitled to the support of a loyal and generous nation than that PRINCE, who has, merely for the sake of the public benefit, accepted the Regency under conditions which are certainly less flattering to ambition than humiliating to personal dignity; a Prince whose amiable dispositions extort praises from every party, and to whom, during the present unfortunate illness of his Majesty, the nation looks up as to the representative of the illustrious house of Brunswick, under whose mild and happy Government this nation has, during three successive reigns, enjoyed a degree and length of prosperity which have seldom, if ever, before fallen to the lot of humanity.

It is to be hoped, then, that soon after the Regent has assumed the reins of Government, the inhabitants of Birmingham will join with the rest of the nation (some of which have already addressed the Prince) in a LOYAL ADDRESS;

CONDOLING with him on the present lamentable incapacity of the King ;

Expressing our happiness in having an Heir Apparent of our Royal House fully capable of supplying the deficiency ;

CONGRATULATING him on his accession to the Regency ;

THANKING him for his gracious acceptance, for the public benefit, of the Regency, under the restrictions appointed by Parliament ;

Assuring him of our unvariable attachment to his Royal House, and to the principles of the British constitution, as established at the Revolution ; and that in consequence of these principles we ardently long to see the Crown of these realms restored to its ancient splendor, by the compleat and perfect recovery of his Majesty ; or if that blessing cannot be obtained, by the wisdom of Parliament removing these temporary restrictions.

In such an unexceptional address which is SUBMITTED to public consideration, it is to be hoped every loyal inhabitant will join ; and that he will lay aside, in so momentous a crisis, his paltry attachments or prejudices for or against one Minister or another ; considering always that the nation ought to guard equally against the ambition of every party, that MINISTERS, like their Masters, the KINGS and Princes of the earth, are but imperfect and perishable individuals, while the CONSTITUTION ought to be preserved ENTIRE and IMMORTAL.

At the end of February a message was delivered to both Houses of Parliament, announcing the King's recovery. The celebration of this event in Birmingham and the consequences to one section of the people are given in the ensuing extracts :—

March 16, 1789.—On Wednesday last, as soon as certain intelligence arrived at this place of his Majesty's Message being delivered to both Houses of Parliament, the inhabitants were assiduously occupied in furnishing their windows with lights, and making every other preparation to demonstrate that gratitude and gladness which the happy and providential recovery of our lately afflicted Sovereign has diffused throughout his kingdoms. The Officers of the town gave orders for the bells to be immediately rung ; and with the evening a more general and brilliant illumination commenced than was ever known in this place. Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, the streets were filled with persons of every description ; transparencies and emblematical devices gave a beauty to the scene ; and on this night the most unequivocal tokens of loyalty and attachment to the Sovereign were exhibited in the rejoicings of the inhabitants of the town of Birmingham. The Post-Office, the Navigation Office (before which three tons of Coals were burnt), the Swan Inn, a house in St. Paul's Square, and the house of the High Bailiff, (Henry Clay,* Esq.) were particularly distinguished for the beauty and arrangement of their lights. Over the door of the latter was formed with variegated lamps, a large and splendid Crown, and cypher G.R., which had a most brilliant effect. Fireworks were displayed in various parts of the town, and the young gentlemen of King Edward's Free School manifested their early affection for their King by one of the most splendid exhibitions of this kind. One accident unfortunately happened in the street by the imprudent discharge of a piece of ordnance, which so terribly shattered a poor boy's legs that an immediate amputation was

* Mr. Clay was the founder of the japan trade of Birmingham. He was a large-hearted and public-spirited gentleman.

found necessary ; but on this evening we have heard of no other. The populace were quiet and orderly, and in only one respect was there any departure from the general decorum ; but in this instance we were particularly sorry to observe it, as we are convinced our neighbours, the people called Quakers (who had their windows broken, and in one or two instances even by being shot at) were restricted by their religious scruples only, from uniting in the general mode of expressing their feelings upon this and every other happy and fortunate occurrence ; and we are the more concerned at the wanton attack that was made upon them, because we believe that no abuse of the same kind has been offered them elsewhere, and it was done here in direct violation of the orders of our Magistracy, who gave public notice and did all in their power, considering the shortness of their time, for the protection of this respectable people.

Amidst the general festivity and national exultation for the recovery of his Majesty, few individuals have had the spirit or opportunity to testify upon the occasion such zeal, loyalty, and joy, as Mr. Boulton, of Soho, near this town. On Thursday Evening, after giving an elegant entertainment to a few select friends, his house, his gardens, menagerie, and the whole pile of his extensive manufactory, were completely and grandly illuminated with many thousand lamps of various colours, most judiciously disposed. At one extremity of the manufactory appeared from the building, in variegated shades, the letter G ; at the other, the letter R, and in the centre was a magnificent Crown, formed in the same stile, under which was seen a brilliant transparency of an elegant figure of Britannia, bent in a devout and supplicating posture, with her eyes directed to heavenly irradiations, and encircled by this happily-expressed motto,

LOST TO BRITANNIA'S HOPES,
BUT TO OUR PRAVERS RESTORED.

The several houses surrounding and in the neighbourhood of Soho were likewise illuminated, bonfires were lighted, and the whole formed one of the most luminous, striking, and splendid displays that can be imagined.

On Thursday night the members of the Bucks' and Liberal Societies in this town, united at the Shakespear Tavern to celebrate his Majesty's recovery ; on Friday there was a public dinner at Vauxhall upon the same occasion, and a grand entertainment in this town is now in agitation.

Accounts have been received by the Printers, from almost every place to which this paper in its extensive circulation goes, of public rejoicings and preparations for them, upon the happy restoration of the King to his health and people. The limits of a newspaper will not permit them to indulge the loyal wishes of their kind correspondents, or themselves, by inserting all that has been sent them. This, they hope, will be admitted as their apology ; for they can hardly *enumerate* the various places which have been most zealous, conspicuously to express their own and the general joy. No event in the annals of this country has occasioned such universal exultation, nor ever did the father of a people experience such pleasing and convincing proofs of his subjects attachment and affection.

Thursday, April 23, was appointed a Day of Thanksgiving for the recovery of the King. It was kept throughout the country with manifestations of unbounded loyalty, rejoicing, and enthusiasm. As will be seen, Birmingham was not behind any of her neighbours in this trinity of virtues :—

April 27, 1789.—Thursday last, the day of public Thanksgiving for the Recovery of our Gracious Sovereign, was religiously observed by all ranks of persons in this town ; and the crowded manner in which every place of divine worship was filled evinced the sincere and devout gratitude of a people for the signal and providential restoration of their beloved Monarch. On Friday evening the principal streets of the town were illuminated, and various suitable Transparencies were exhibited ; but those which chiefly attracted public notice were three large ones that occupied the whole front of the Theatre Portico, and which were executed by Mr. Wilson, portrait painter, of this town, at the expence of a numerous party of Gentlemen, who met in the evening at the Shakespeare Tavern adjoining to celebrate the joyful event. In the centre transparency appeared the King in regalia, seated on his throne ; Esculapius, the God of Medicine, was placing the crown upon his head, and Britannia stood before him with a scroll, on which was inscribed—*Thrice happy the prince who reigns in the hearts of his people.*—Above, in the midst of heavenly irradiations, was written—*Your prayers are heard.* On the right-hand transparency was represented an elegant figure of Liberality rewarding the Arts and Sciences, with this motto—*Hail happy people by whose Sovereign's patronage the arts and sciences flourish*—and on the left Neptune was seen in his car, with all his Tritons and watery attendants, bearing a flag, on which was inscribed—*Let the troubled ocean cease, the Monarch of my favoured isle resumes his sway—Long may he reign.* The design and execution of the whole did credit to Mr. Wilson, and we have only to regret that the frequent storms of hail and rain, during the evening, in a great degree lessened its beauty and effect.

The transparencies of Rubards, the artist, in St. Paul's Square, were also very beautiful ; on one of them was painted the King's arms, and a G.R., with the eye of providence over them, and the motto—*God saves the King.* On the other was an excellent Medallion of his Majesty, encircled by a rich wreath of flowers, with suitable mottoes. About six o'clock of the same evening, among other demonstrations of joy, a gentleman gratified the populace by letting off, from St. Paul's Square, a Mongolfier balloon of 50 feet in circumference, which from the favourable direction of the wind glided over the town in a very majestic and pleasing manner. Upon it was written—*Thus for health restored our grateful thanks in one united ardour rise to heaven.* Its course seemed to be towards Oxford, and any intelligence of its descent the printers will be glad of. During the evening we are glad to say that there was no disturbance, rioting or breaking of the windows of that respectable body whose religious scruples prevent their illuminating, but all was peaceably and happily conducted.

On Thursday a particular form of prayer and psalms, composed for the occasion, by Rabbi Samuel Abraham, were read and sung at the Jew's synagogue in this town, for the recovery of his Majesty.

Messrs. Pearson and Rollason published—

“Embellished with striking Likenesses of their MAJESTIES, and Emblematical Devices ; engraved upon COPPER PLATES ; a NEW SONG, (the Music by Mr. Jeremiah Clark) in commemoration of his MAJESTY's happy recovery, as it was performed at the Concert, on Thursday Evening last, at the Hotel in this Town, with unbounded applause.”

Here is the first allusion to that extraordinary work, the Summit Bridge :—

June 21, 1789.—That stupendous work now carrying on by the proprietors of our Navigation at the summit, near Smethwick, is at this time so far advanced that we understand the water will be let into its new course within a very few days. So vast and seemingly impracticable an undertaking, has, we believe, never before been attempted in this kingdom; mountains have been raised and levelled, and a canal of a well's depth has been cut almost under the canal; in short, it is not easy to convey a just idea of what human art and labour have in this particular instance accomplished. Three hundred labourers employed in the business, some in digging, some in filling, and the greater part in wheeling, in succession, up the acclivity, for a mile in extent, their loaded barrows upon the stages erected for them, presents to the spectator a most pleasing, busy, and novel scene; and we sincerely hope that the spirited body who could attempt, and that the Engineers who have executed, so great and expensive an undertaking, will all derive their due advantage from its good success.

We now come to a series of extracts relating to a social question, still of the greatest importance. It will be seen that our forefathers set about working out a practical solution of the evil with earnestness. While we are now discussing the causes of the increase of pauperism, and Parliament is engaged in legislation on the poor and poor-houses, we might borrow a few useful hints from the past. On August 31, 1789, the public were informed that a Committee of the Guardians of the poor had entered into an agreement with Mr. George Robinson, for the employment of the poor, subject, of course, to the approbation of the Guardians at a public meeting. This meeting was held on the 1st of September, and on the 7th this statement was published :—

EMPLOYMENT OF THE POOR OF BIRMINGHAM.—Many of the Guardians and Overseers of the Poor attended several Meetings, in order to learn what advantages the inhabitants of Wolverhampton had acquired by a contract with William Griffin for the employment of their poor, and sundry other particulars.—And to consider whether it was advisable to make a contract for the employment of the poor of this town, with other considerations relative to the assessments and disbursements; and some of the gentlemen gave themselves the trouble of going to Wolverhampton, to enquire what had been the effects of the agreement there made; and after many meetings and very deliberate considerations, five of the gentlemen agreed with Mr. George Robinson upon certain propositions to be laid before the Guardians and Overseers of the Poor, which at a Public Meeting were unanimously approved, and Mr. B. Parker was desired to put them into proper form of law; but at a second public meeting it was thought expedient to print the original propositions, and circulate copies of them in such a manner that the sense of the inhabitants might be taken thereon.

THO. HARRISON, Secretary to the Guardians.

Birmingham, Sept. 3, 1789.

N.B. The agreement is now at Mr. Benjamin Parker, Attorney's Office, Snow-hill. for the inspection of the inhabitants of the town, where it will remain one week from this day,

and be then sent to the vestry of the Workhouse, there to remain fourteen days for the same purpose.

This was followed by an official caution to the inhabitants :—

BIRMINGHAM WORKHOUSE.

Vestry Room, October 12, 1789.—The increase of Poor in this Town, having lately occasioned unusual Applications for Clothing as well as pecuniary Relief, the Overseers, with all due Deference to the principal Inhabitants, request that they will be very cautious in future to whom they give Notes of Recommendation, it having been discovered that numerous Deceptions have been practised; and they will thankfully receive any Information, by Line, addressed to the Vestry Room, of improper People receiving the Public Money; being desirous of rectifying the Abuses too common on the Town's Benevolence. The Necessity of this Request must appear very forcible, when the Public are informed that at a recent Sale of pledged Goods in Digbeth, there were great Numbers of Parish Garments sold (some of which were re-purchased by an Overseer) and appeared not to have been worn at all.

P.S. It is particularly requested of the Pawnbrokers, if any Garments that have the appearance of having been given from this House should be offered to pledge or sale that they would stop the Person, and send for the nearest Overseer, as they are determined to make examples of those who are detected in such Abuse.

The plan for employing the poor will be read with much interest. There were two proposals, one by George Robinson, the other by Josiah Robins. These are printed in parallel columns in the *Gazette*, and are as follows :—Mr. Robinson's Proposals :—

Birmingham, June 17, 1789.—PROPOSALS *for employing the POOR in the WORKHOUSE, submitted to the Inspection of the GUARDIANS, and ready to be engaged in by* GEORGE ROBINSON.

Article I.—The present shopping, and more if required, shall be let Rent free, and a sufficient quantity of Wheels, Reels, Cards, &c., provided, to completely furnish the Manufactory where the Poor are employed, not exceeding the sum of £120, the said Tools to be confined to the use of the Poor, and kept in repair at the expense of the Undertaker; and a sufficient Building to be also provided to employ a certain Number of private Servants to instruct the Paupers or finish particular Goods, not exceeding the number of twenty.

II.—That the Paupers shall work three Months from the Signing of the Agreement without any Pay. After that Time, 1s. per week shall be allowed for each employed above 8 years old; and 6d. per week for each under that age; provided that each Pauper has worked one Month in the Manufactory.

III.—That a Capital of £500 be advanced as it may be wanted, on Mr. GEORGE ROBINSON'S own Security.

IV.—That the two houses belonging to the Town, fronting Lichfield-street, shall be repaired and made commodious for the Undertaker, and six tons of coals shall be allowed annually for the Undertaker, and his Assistant's Use.

V.—That Coals shall be allowed for the Manufactory where the Poor are employed, under the direction of the Committee.

VI.—That no Out-poor shall be relieved except on FRIDAYS (unless in Cases of Accident or sudden Illness), until they be visited, and a Report made by a Committee to be appointed for that Purpose.

VII.—That the Workhouse in future be supplied by public Proposals every three months; Notice of such Articles as are wanted being first inserted in the Birmingham Newspapers.

VIII.—A Committee to be appointed to visit the poor employed, to encourage them to labour, and be obedient to those that the Undertaker may place over them, and in case of any being refractory, so as to refuse to Work, such Committee to order them proper punishment.

IX.—That when the Levies shall be reduced to 8, that all the Tools and Implements then in Use shall become the Property of the Undertaker, and also one Hundred Pounds, Part of the £500 lent on Bond. And when the Levies are reduced to 7, then £200 more, part of the £500 lent on Bond, shall become the property of the Undertaker. And while the Levies continue at 7, the Undertaker shall be allowed £100 per Annum for each succeeding year. And when the Levies are reduced to 6, then the remaining £200, Part of the £500 lent on Bond, to be given up to the Undertaker, with his Bond also. And while the Levies continue at or under 6, the Undertaker shall be allowed £200 per Annum, for each succeeding year during the Term.

X.—That a Committee be appointed to go with the Overseers to assess Buildings, and no Person assessed, or who may be assessed, to be excused their levies, without the Consent of the Committee.

XI.—That no building be purchased, or any new building be erected, within the Time of the contract, to be paid for out of the Poor's Levies.

XII.—That if it appears at the expiration of the said Term that the 9th Article has not succeeded, owing to the Guardians and Overseers not fulfilling this Contract on their Part, then the said Undertaker shall have a claim of demanding what Sum remains due on his Bond given for £500.

XIII.—This Agreement to be certain for NINE YEARS.

XIV.—That if any Disputes arise respecting this Agreement, such Disputes to be settled by Arbitration.

Mr. Robins's proposals :—

Birmingham, September 16, 1789.—PROPOSALS for employing the POOR in the WORKHOUSE, submitted to the Inspection of the GUARDIANS, and ready to be engaged in by JOSIAH ROBINS, Worsted maker, Digbeth.

Article I.—The Shopping already erected shall be fitted up, and the Wheels, Reels, Cards, &c., in Hand made fit for Use, and such other Shopping and Implements as may be wanted, shall be provided by the Guardians and Overseers; where the Undertaker shall employ all the Paupers put under his Care, and find them Materials to work upon at the accustomed Prices for each Article; shall keep an exact Account of their Earnings and shall deliver it in weekly to the Clerk appointed for that Purpose.

II.—Such of the Paupers in the House as the Undertaker shall think capable, and proper to oversee and instruct others, shall be distinguished in their Apparel and abide in Apartments distinct from the Rest; and if the Undertaker shall find it necessary to engage a person or persons to instruct the Paupers, or to assist him in

the Management of the Business, their Wages, with all other necessary Expenditure, shall be paid out of the Money arising from the Labour of the Poor: the Remainder of which shall be divided Monthly; such Part for the Use of the Undertaker as the Committee shall think reasonable, the remaining Part for the use of the Poor.

III.—The Time of Labour shall be from Six o'Clock in the Morning in Summer, and from Seven in Winter, till Seven at Night, allowing them Half-an-Hour for Breakfast, and one Hour for Dinner each Day, Sundays and such Holidays as shall be thought proper only excepted.

IV.—All the Paupers who are to work shall sleep in Wards separate from the rest; and Persons shall be appointed to make and oblige them to enter the Manufactory at the stated Time in the Morning; also after Breakfast and Dinner, as it shall be announced by Sound of Bell. And should it appear on an inspection into the State of the Out-Poor, that any are capable of Labour, such shall be obliged to come into the House for that Purpose, or be deprived of their Pay.

V.—That a general call of the Poor in the House be repeated monthly, and the Out-Poor quarterly, to examine them respecting their Abilities, and what they have been accustomed to work at, and to class them accordingly; and when the different Classes are formed, viz., such as the Sempstresses, Flax-Spinners, Hurd-Spinners, Jersey-Spinners, Wool or Mop Yarn-Spinners, Tye-Stitchers, Shank-Makers, or any other Work that may be taken out from other Manufactories, which the Undertaker will endeavour to obtain, and apply for, viz., to the Shopkeepers for making of Sale Shirts, Quilting, &c.; to Thread-Makers for Flax-Spinning; to Bag or Wick Yarn-Makers for Hurd-Spinning; to Worsted-Makers for Jersey-Spinning; to Brush-Makers for Wool-Spinning; to Patten Tye-Makers for Tye-Stitching; and to such other of the Manufacturers who shall choose to have any Part of their Work done at the Workhouse. This the Undertaker engages to do for twelve Months, at which Time, if approved (which he has no doubt of) will continue in the same.

VI.—That a voluntary Committee of five or more Guardians, with the Overseers, who will heartily engage in the Matter, shall be appointed to visit the Poor employed, to encourage them to Labour, and to be obedient to those the Undertaker may place over them; and, in case of any being refractory, so as to refuse to work, such Committee shall order them proper Punishment, and shall adjust such other Matters as may be found necessary, and make a monthly Report to the House of their Proceedings.

VII.—That all Books of Accounts respecting this Business shall be kept at the Workhouse, and a regular Statement published twice in the Year, to shew the Advantage or Disadvantage this Undertaking is to the Town at large.

VIII.—That so long as Josiah Robins merits the Patronage of the Public, by his judicious Arrangement of this Business, no hasty Change is intended to be made to his Disadvantage, but be considered as entitled to a Preference.

Mr. Robins's plan was adopted by the Churchwardens and Overseers, and afterwards approved by the inhabitants. The next two extracts narrate these facts:—

October 26, 1789.—BIRMINGHAM WORKHOUSE VESTRY-ROOM.—The Churchwardens and Overseers, having long seen the great necessity of Employing the Poor, have unanimously (agreeable to the last Special General Meeting of the Guardians, and conformable to Law) and by the Approbation of the Magistrates, agreed with Mr. JOSIAH

ROBINS to undertake the Manufactory in the House for Twelve Months (which Agreement meets with the Approbation of the Magistrates), as it is suggested, that at the Expiration of that Period a sufficient Experiment will be made to enable both the Undertaker and the Town to form a proper Judgment of the Advantages likely to attend this System; as they think it by no means prudent, at the present, to make any Engagement for a longer Time, for if the Advantages should be great that attend this Scheme, it is but equitable that the Interest of private Individuals give way to public good, the Overseers also earnestly request the Assistance of those Gentlemen who wish to see this desirable Object accomplished.

Vestry Room, Workhouse, October 28, 1789.—At a numerous and respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town this Day, at the Public Office, Dale End, in consequence of public Advertisement relative to the Employment of the Poor (the Rev. Mr. Riland in the Chair), the two Proposals were read, and taken into consideration; when that of Mr. Josiah Robins was almost unanimously recommended by the Gentlemen present to the Overseers and Guardians to be adopted, in Preference to Mr. George Robinson's, there being only Five dissentient Voices.

In consequence thereof, the Overseers respectfully inform the Inhabitants, that they are determined to prosecute Mr. Robins's Plan with unwearied Attention, to their utmost Abilities.

The Question of the Test and Corporation Acts was again discussed by the dissenters, and on October 14, "a numerous meeting of deputies from the seven Congregations of Protestant Dissenters" was held. Mr. William Russell was in the Chair, and the following resolutions were passed unanimously:—

At a numerous Meeting of Deputies from the seven Congregations of Protestant Dissenters, in Birmingham, on Wednesday, the fourteenth Day of October, 1789, William Russell, Esq., in the Chair, the following Resolutions were passed unanimously:—

1. THAT the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Dissenters' Committee in London, for the Zeal and Attention which they have manifested in their repeated Applications to Parliament for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; and for the Assurance they have given the Dissenters at large, that they will steadily persevere in the pursuit of their Object.

2. THAT they be informed, that we depend upon their unremitted Attention; and that we are ready to co-operate with them in every constitutional Measure that may be advisable, for promoting the Repeal of all penal Statutes in Matters of Religion.

3. THAT it is advisable to consult the Dissenters in other parts of England, in order to promote a Division of the Kingdom into DISTRICTS, with a View to each Part deputing a proportionate Number of Delegates to attend a general Meeting in London.

4. THAT in order to procure the necessary Intelligence for our own Government, as well as to inform our Brethren at a Distance of our Sentiments and Dispositions, it is necessary to choose from the present Deputies a COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE, who shall be empowered to address themselves, in the Name and on Behalf of the Body of Dissenters in Birmingham, expressing their entire unanimity in a Desire to promote the great object before-mentioned, and calling upon our Dissenting Brethren in other Parts for their concurrent Advice and Endeavours therein.

5. THAT this Committee be impowered to adopt such Measures as they deem eligible for carrying into Execution the Purposes above-mentioned ; and use their best Endeavours to engage the neighbouring Congregations to unite with this Association, as well as to promote the general Union above referred to.

6. THAT they be also authorised to call together the general Body of Delegates for this District, by Advertisement in the public Papers, when they shall think proper.

The following Resolutions, of a more General Nature, also passed unanimously :—

1. THAT English Citizens, of every Description, are indiscriminately entitled to the Privileges of British Subjects.

2. THAT Protestant Dissenters, as such, have not forfeited their claims to any of the Privileges of British Subjects.

3. THAT Protestant Dissenters have for a series of years, been unjustly deprived of many of the usual Privileges and general Benefits of Citizens.

4. THAT it is their Duty to petition the Legislature, as a body, for Redress of their Grievances ; and to continue their Applications until their civil Rights be restored, and until all penal Statutes in matters of Religion be repealed.

It was likewise agreed unanimously :—

1. THAT the Resolutions of this Meeting be now published, in the Name of the Deputies from the seven Congregations of the three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters in Birmingham.

2. THAT this Meeting be adjourned, subject to the Call of the Chairman of the Committee of Correspondence, and that William Russell, Esquire, be appointed Chairman to the said Committee.

3.—THAT the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman, for the Ability and Candour with which he has conducted the Business.

(Signed), WILLIAM RUSSELL, Chairman.

The Test and Corporation Acts were the source of much controversy and agitation at this period. They were in the battle cry between church and dissent, and this was a time when power had neither mercy nor justice on its side. The power was with the church, and was used with a disregard to the feelings and consciences of those outside its pale with an ostentation of dominancy especially galling. The *Gazette* judiciously held aloof from joining either side. On January 25, 1790, this notice appeared :—

The Printer of this paper having received several anonymous paragraphs which he is called upon to insert, both for and against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, thinks it necessary to inform his friends, as well of the Established Church as those among the Dissenters, that he cannot, consistently with that line of impartiality to which in the conduct of this paper he has ever strove to adhere, insert any paragraph, on either side of the question, as proceeding from himself ; but without favour or partial regard to any persuasion, such attention shall always be paid to whatever may be sent from respectable quarters, as shall be compatible with the plan of, and proper for, this *Gazette*.

The course taken by the church party will be seen from the notices of their meetings and the resolutions they adopted. A county meeting was held at Warwick, on the 2nd of February, "to take into consideration proper measures for the defence of the Constitution against the present attempts of the Dissenters to obtain a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts." There are twenty-eight signatures to the advertisement calling this meeting, among which are such names as Denbigh, Aylesford, Warwick, Leicester, Willoughby de Broke, and others of the leading aristocracy of the county. The course taken at these meetings was preparing the way for the riots of 1791. Their temper and tone will be best gathered from the following report of this county meeting:—

February 8, 1790.—At a most numerous and respectable Meeting of the principal Noblemen, Gentlemen, and Clergy of the County of Warwick (Members of the Established Church), held the Second Day of February, 1790, at the County Hall, in Warwick, pursuant to public Advertisement, for the Purpose of taking into Consideration proper Measures for the Defence of the Constitution, against the present Attempts of the Dissenters to obtain a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, The Right Honourable the Earl of Aylesford in the Chair, the following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to,—

1. That the Church of England, as by Law established, is an essential Part of the British Constitution.
2. That the Right to share the public Employments and Emoluments of a State is, like all other Rights in a State of Society, subject to the Controul of the supreme Power, that is the Legislature.
3. That the Offices and Employments from which the Dissenters are excluded, by the Corporation and Test Acts, are not Rights indiscriminately open to the Claim of every Citizen, but Trusts to be conferred at the Discretion of the Crown, for the Service of the State, or of Bodies Corporate, for the Management of their particular Concerns.
4. That the Legislature has a Right to confine public Employments to Persons professing the Established Religion of the Country, if it shall appear expedient for the public Good.
5. That the Provisions which the Wisdom of Legislature has thought fit to make, by the Corporation and Test Acts, for the Security of the Church and State, have been found sufficient to answer the Purpose, and that it is highly expedient to continue them in force.
6. That the Protestant Dissenters, during the Mild and Auspicious Reign of his present Majesty, have been completely exempted from every Restraint upon Religious Liberty.
7. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Baronets, the Representatives of this County, and the other Members of the House of Commons who opposed the two last Attempts of the Dissenters to obtain a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts.

8. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Right Honourable the Earl of Aylesford, for the Zeal he had shewn in support of the Constitution, in Church and State, for his acceptance of the Chair, and his truly proper Conduct therein.

9. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Earl of Denbigh, the Earl of Plymouth, the Earl of Warwick, and Lord Willoughby de Broke, for their Attendance on this Occasion.

10. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Mr. Digby, for the very handsome manner in which he brought forward, and supported, the above Resolutions.

11. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Inhabitants of Stratford-upon Avon, for the readiness which they have shewn to unite with this Meeting in the support of the Constitution.

12. That Copies of these Resolutions be sent by the Chairman to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, our Representatives, and also published in the London, Birmingham, and other Country Papers.

AYLESFORD, Chairman.

The ratepayers were earnestly working on the police question. Meeting after meeting was held; a night patrol was established, which seems to have worked efficiently and well. This, however, did not satisfy them. They determined to apply to Parliament for a bill for the better government of the town. Our next extract gives us an insight into their mode of procedure, and the difficulties with which they had to contend :—

February 8, 1790.—PUBLIC POLICE.—At a Meeting of the Committee on this Business, held at the Public Office, in Dale End, on Friday, the 29th of January, 1790, Wm. Russell, Esq., in the Chair; the fourth Proposition adopted at the Town-meeting on the 8th of December last being read, which obliged Keepers of Lodging-houses to take out Licenses,—

Resolved,—That as many of those houses are known to harbour both lewd Women and Men of the vilest characters, at the same time that they take in out-Apprentices, who thereby meet an early Introduction to the Habits of Vice and become instructed in every Species of Profligacy, it is necessary to consider well on the Means most likely to remedy this Evil. And in order to this it was suggested, that Houses erected at the Public Expense for the Reception of Out-Apprentices, and superintended by Guardians to be chosen for that Purpose, might be expedient; but as it appeared the Subject had not been considered with that Attention which an Evil of this Magnitude evidently required, it was agreed to adjourn the Determination of the Question to a future Day. In the mean Time it is recommended to every Member of the Committee to confer with his Neighbours on the Subject, and to come prepared with all the information he can procure, at the next Meeting of this Committee.

A Misunderstanding having prevailed in the Town with respect to the Mode of conducting the intended Application to Parliament,—

Resolved,—That the Public be informed, in the next Town Paper, that the Heads of the Bill, when prepared, will, before it goes to Parliament, be laid before the general Police Committee, to which every respectable Inhabitant will be publicly invited.

Resolved,—To adjourn to Wednesday, the 10th of February, at ten o'clock in the Morning precisely, at the Public Office.

On the 22nd of February, the following analysis of the proposed Act was published :—

Heads of a Bill intended to be applied for this present Session of Parliament, for the better Regulation and Improvement of the Town of Birmingham.

The Commissioners for carrying into Execution the former Acts, as well as the present proposed Act, to be chosen by the Inhabitants once in three Years, by Ballot, in the same Manner as the Guardians of the Poor :—Any seven of them to act in all cases, and the Commissioners to elect annually five of their own Body to act as Justices, as far only as relates to this Act, with Liberty for any Person who may think himself aggrieved to appeal to the Quarter Sessions. Any Inhabitants, whether rated or not, to be admitted as Evidence in all Cases.

The Commissioners to have Power to purchase and remove the Welsh Cross, and Joseph Knight, the Glover's House, and the House adjoining ; also the Houses occupied by — Bullock, and — Lawson ; all the Houses in the occupation of Messrs. Clarke and Ashmore, Edward Waldron, — Allen, and — Atkins, with the back Houses and Buildings adjoining to Spiceal-street, and all the Shambles, with the Dwelling-houses belonging thereto, and the Houses called the Roundabout Houses, the Swan Alley at the upper End of Worcester-street, leading into New-street, the lower End of Worcester-street leading into Edgbaston-street, and the lower parts of Moor-street, and Digbeth.

In order to defray the additional Expense of extending and improving a General Watch, and for executing the other important Regulations intended to be entrusted to the Commissioners under the proposed Act, they shall have Power to increase the present Rates by an additional Assessment of Sixpence in the Pound upon all Houses under £10 per Annum, Ninepence in the Pound upon all Houses from £10 to £20, and One Shilling in the Pound upon all Houses above £20 per Annum, and no Person whomsoever to be excused from the Rate without the Consent of the Commissioners.

The Commissioners to have Power to borrow any sum not exceeding £20,000.

The Commissioners to have Power to pave with flag Stones the Foot-Paths of any Street, whenever two thirds of the Inhabitants of such Street, as to Value of Rent, shall make Application to the Commissioners for that Purpose, such Paving to be done at the Expense of the Landlords or Owners of the Houses and Premises adjoining such Foot-Paths, and the Landlords to have the Power to charge an Increase of Rent of £5 per cent. per Annum on the Money laid out.

The Commissioners to have power to improve every Opportunity of setting back any House or other Building that now projects beyond the regular Line of any Street or other Range of Building, whenever such House or Building shall be taken down to be re-built ; Satisfaction to be made to the Owner.

In all new Streets, and the present unpaved Streets, the Builders or Owners of Houses, and the Owners of Lands adjoining such Streets, whenever three-fourths of any such Street shall be built, to be obliged to pave the Square of their Houses or Land into the Middle of such Street, under the Direction of the Commissioners, and all such new Streets when paved to be exempt from paying Highway Levies for five years from that period. A Proviso, that when Owners of Land adjoining such Streets have only Life Estates in such Land, their Executors may compel the next succeeding Owner to reimburse the expense.

Previous to any Street being built upon, proper Notice to be given to the Commissioners, who shall appoint a Surveyor to adjust and settle the Level of the said Street, which shall be conformed to by every Person who shall erect any Building within the Limits of the said Street. All Streets, both new and old, to be subject to the Regulation of the Commissioners, as to the future Pavement of them, and as to their Level also ; though it is not intended that the Commissioners shall interfere with the Appointment of the Overseers of the Highways, or with the Collection of the Highway Levies, but only direct in what Manner the Money shall be expended, as far as relates to the Town.

All Bulks, Bulk Sashes, and Projections, erected prior to the first Act obtained by the Commissioners, to be subject to the same Powers as those erected subsequent to the passing of the said Act, half the Expense of removing such Bulks, Bulk Sashes, &c., to be paid by the Commissioners, provided such half shall not, in any case, exceed the sum of Fifty Shillings.

No Coach or Chaise without Horse to stand in any Street, no Stage Waggon or Stage Cart to load or unload in any Street, except they take up or set down a Loading at the House or Warehouse of a Merchant, Manufacturer, or Shopkeeper, unconnected with any such Stage Waggon or Stage Cart. Chaining Waggons, Carts, Coaches, Chaises, or other Carriages, to be considered a legal Seizure. To regulate the Manner of all Waggons, Carts, and all other Carriages, loading and unloading, and of passing along the Streets.

Manure not to be suffered to remain in the Streets after ten o'clock in the Morning.

The Owners of Hackney Coaches to be put under Regulations similar to those in London.

All Coals to be sold by the Weight of One Hundred and Twenty Pounds to the Hundred, under a Penalty of Ten Shillings.

The Boundaries of the Town to be ascertained from Time to Time by the Commissioners, and Lamps to extend, and the Rates to be collected to the Extent of such Boundaries.

On this bill, we read a fortnight later :—

March 8, 1790.—Some apprehension having been entertained by many respectable inhabitants, that the bill in agitation "For the better regulation and improvement of this town," might be too hastily carried through the House of Commons, several gentlemen were on Saturday morning invited to meet a joint deputation of the Commissioners of Lamps and Scavengers, and the Police Committee, to confer upon the subject ; when the business was discussed with great candour, and it was agreed that the bill should be laid before the town, which we doubt not will give general satisfaction.

The bill for the better government of the town was read a first time in the House of Commons, and on March 8, the Commissioners announce that previous to its being read a second time "printed copies of the Bill will be distributed among the Inhabitants three Weeks antecedent to a Town's Meeting being called, for the Approbation or Disapprobation of the Inhabitants, to the further Prosecution of the said Bill."

Here is an example of the official pomp and splendour of those days :—

March 29, 1790.—On Monday last Henry Clay, Esq., the High Sheriff of this county, proceeded from his house in New Hall Street, in this town, to attend the Judge, Mr. Baron Thompson, during the Assize at Warwick, the commission for which was opened on Tuesday. Few gentlemen have made so brilliant an appearance, or been so numerously attended in the high office which he holds in the county, as Mr. Clay. He was accompanied by the Magistrates, neighbouring gentry, and principal inhabitants of the town, in their carriages, and on horseback. His javelin men and servants were numerous, and were clothed in rich liveries of white faced with red, silver epaulettes, buttons, and capes; his postilions were in jackets of scarlet and silver, with black caps and silver tassels. The whole formed a most splendid train of nearly half a mile in length; and we may venture to say, from the concourse from all parts, that the procession was beheld and cheered by upwards of forty thousand spectators. We have been favoured by a friend with the following lines on the day:

The day was delightful, and brilliant the train,
And thousands went tripping way;
'Twas harmony all, and may harmony reign,
Nor Discord her Banners display.

In Europe's Grand Toyshop, with lovers of trade,
The scene what great pleasure must crown,
Deserved respect to the Arts has been paid,
And honour it does to the Town.

The Aged and Young—fondly mix'd in the throng,
And gaz'd with anxiety keen;
'Twas a crowded Spring Fair—and like mercantile ware,
All Sorts and all Sizes were seen.

Our next extract contains a bit of very interesting information:—

April 19, 1790.—COPPER MINING AND SMELTING.—A Company is now establishing for the Purpose of raising Copper Ore, and an Offer is made of Mineral Grounds for that Purpose, where the Probability of Success is considerable. An unlimited Sum is proposed to be subscribed by Manufacturers and Consumers of Copper and Brass, in Shares of £100 each; and so much of each share only is proposed to be advanced as the Conductors of this Undertaking may find necessary. The Subscribers to form themselves into a Company on a plan similar to that of the Birmingham Metal Company, under the Firm of the Birmingham Mining and Copper Company. It is probable this Plan may prove very beneficial to the Birmingham Manufacturers, by preventing as much as possible the Monopoly and arbitrary Price of such essential Articles as Copper and Brass. General Proposals, and a List of the present Subscribers, are left with the Printer.

Another undertaking of considerable importance was announced on April 26 of this year:—

We have the pleasure to say, that several Gentlemen in this town are associating themselves to carry into effect a scheme for the better supplying of our market with Fish, at prices considerably reduced. The public-spirited projectors of this scheme are deservedly entitled to the thanks of every well-wisher to the prosperity of the place.

The year 1790 was marked by a quarrel and division in the useful Commercial Committee. It arose from the usual cause, the expenditure of the funds. We have previously seen that a deputation was appointed by the Committee to oppose the bill brought into Parliament for permission to export brass. There were gentlemen who thought that the expenses of this opposition should be paid out of the funds, and others who thought not. A meeting was held on the 11th of May to consider this question, and also to consider—

A Bill which the Company of Goldsmiths in London have brought into Parliament.

Letters which have been received from John Palmer, Esq., Surveyor, and Comptroller of the General Post Office.

To examine what Measures have been used to establish such a mode of trying the quality of Sword Blades, as may effectually secure Swords of the most perfect quality for the King's Troops, and to consider what further measures may be necessary, in order to obtain for the manufacturers of this Town, the Reputation of making swords that may be relied on.

The attempts that are in contemplation to obtain a free Exportation of Button Shanks, Button Shells, Button Moulds, or any Part of our Wares, in an unfinished State, or any Tools, or Machines used in our Manufactures, and to repeal the Provisions made to prevent our Artificers leaving the Kingdom.

This meeting was probably a stormy one, it was certainly a long one, and had to be adjourned until the 18th. The importance attached to these meetings is evident from the careful report which was published of the proceedings. A more interesting document of its kind has rarely been published :—

Birmingham Hotel, May 18, 1790.—At a meeting of the Commercial Committee, in consequence of the following Advertisement in both the Newspapers, and Cards sent to the Members :—

“Commercial Committee, Birmingham, May 12, 1790.—The Meeting of the Commercial Committee is adjourned to Tuesday the 18th inst., at five o'clock in the Evening, at the Hotel, to proceed further in the Consideration of the Charges exhibited by Mr. Woolley against Mr. Garbett, their Chairman, and to determine whether the Addition lately made to the Committee was not contrary to the original resolutions :—

W. Villers	William Chance	Joseph Green
Thomas Green	Edward Homer	William Walker
Alexander Walker	Robert Coales	John Guest
Jona Grundy	John Bingham	William Hawkins
Thomas Grundy		

Present :

Matthew Boulton	George Russell	*Harry Hunt
James Watt	John Ryland	*Thomas Green
William Russell	William Ryland	Thomas Gill

Edward Palmer	Samuel Ryland	James Yates
Henry Perkins	James Alston	James Goddington
George Humphreys	Samuel Garbett	Sampson Freeth
*James Woolley	Francis Garbett	B. Blythe
*Robert Coales	William Turner	Jos. Jukes
*William Villers	James Bingham	Joseph Smith
*Jos. Gibbs	Thomas Willmore	Robert Smith
*Thomas Grundy	John Scale	John Hurd
*William Walker	John Bingham	James Benton
Wm. Humphreys	*Jos. Raybone	

The Committee being informed, by Mr. Villers, that Mr. Garbett, their Chairman, had refused to deliver to him the Book containing the Minutes of their Meetings, although he had been in the Chair at the last Meeting ; but had wrote to Mr. Villers that he kept it as necessary for his defence, yet that it was open for his (Mr. Villers's) Inspection, or the Inspection of any other Person, whatever, on the part of Mr. Woolley : And it being represented by Mr. Garbett that Mr. Villers had refused him a Copy of the Resolution of the last Meeting, by which he, as their Chairman. was acquitted of the first charge brought against him by Mr. Woolley ; it was Resolved, that in the opinion of this meeting that Mr. Garbett should continue to keep the Minute Book of this Committee until the present disputes respecting Sword Blades are finally closed, as he hath uniformly allowed any Member of the Committee access to it.

Mr. Garbett then asked Mr. Villers, whether, if he was chosen Chairman of this Meeting, he would, the next morning, allow Mr. Garbett access to the Minutes of the Meeting ; and Mr. Villers not giving a satisfactory answer, Matthew Boulton, Esquire, was requested to take the Chair ; when he read the following minute of the last Meeting, which Mr. Villers had refused Mr. Garbett a Copy of, viz. :—

“ It appears to this Committee, that it was *essentially necessary* for the Good of the Trade, and Satisfaction of the General Officers, that the Agreement made by Mr. Woolley should not be complied with, until the other 400 Blades from Germany arrived, *and for which Mr. Garbett received the Thanks of the Committee two years ago.*”

Mr. Garbett then read a letter from Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., acquainting him that he had applied to the Treasury, in Consequence of the Desire of the last Meeting of this Committee, respecting the Bill which the London Goldsmiths have now before Parliament, and that he had received from Mr. Rose an obliging answer about the same, and about Sword Blades. A grateful sense was then expressed of Sir Robert Lawley's constant attention to the interest of this Town.

Mr. Garbett then proceeded to answer the second Charge, when Mr. Woolley acquainted the Committee he had somewhat further to say on the first Charge, which the Committee refused to hear, as Mr. Garbett had been acquitted of that Charge at the preceding Meeting.

Mr. Woolley then desired to prove his second Charge, but Mr. Garbett *admitting* that he had sent Mr. Gill's Pamphlet to the Members for this County, and that Mr. Woolley had long before that time told him that Mr. Gill's own Servant was the Examiner of his master's and Mr. J. Woolley's Swords ; The Committee desired Mr. Garbett to proceed, when Messrs. Villers, Coales, Woolley, Jos. Gibbs, William Walker, Tho. Grundy, and Joseph Rabone left the room. The Committee, after hearing Mr. Garbett's defence to the second Charge,

Resolved,—That Mr. Garbett acted Judiciously for the Common Interests of the Trade, at the time when the comparative Trials between the Birmingham and German Blades were coming on, in sending an Account of a Proof of Swords at the India House to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, that those Gentlemen might unquestionably see, and be prepared to show on good Authority, that Birmingham Blades had excelled those of Germany.

Mr. Garbett then proceeded to defend himself against Mr. Woolley's third charge, upon which the five following Resolutions were unanimously made, viz. :—

Resolved,—That Mr. Garbett acted very properly in attending the Board of General Officers, with his Son, as Members of this Committee.

Resolved,—That Mr. Garbett did, in every Instance which appears to this Committee, assert that good Swords would be made at Birmingham, if a proper Price was given for them, and a proper Proof established to prevent Insufficiency.

Resolved,—That it does not appear to this Committee that Mr. Garbett ever represented that Mr. Woolley could not make Swords perfectly fit for Service.

Resolved,—That it appears to this Committee that the Manufacturers had sufficient Opportunity of speaking for themselves before the Board of General Officers, and of justifying their own Cause.

Resolved,—That upon hearing Mr. Garbett's defence against Mr. Woolley's third Charge, there does not appear to this Committee any ground for such Charge.

Mr. Garbett then proceeded to defend himself against Mr. Woolley's 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Charges, when the following six Resolutions were unanimously made thereon :—

Resolved,—That as this Committee had declared, fifteen Months after the Trial of Swords at the India House by Col. Windus, "That their great Object was to establish such a Mode of Trial as would effectually secure Swords of the most perfect Quality, and that Troops might more safely rely on, than upon any that were ever made before ;" and as a Board of General Officers had recommended to the King an additional Proof to that which had been used at the India House in 1786, and had recommended that no Swords should be received without undergoing that additional Proof, in the Presence of five or more Colonels or Field Officers, it was highly commendable in Mr. Garbett to desire the Lord Advocate to acquaint Mr. Dundas, and the Directors of the India Company, with the Representation which the General Officers had made to the King.

Resolved,—That it appears to this Committee that Mr. Harvey and Mr. Gill admitted that bad Swords had been made at Birmingham, and that both they and Mr. Woolley were desirous an effectual Proof should be established.

Resolved,—That it appears to this Committee, that Mr. Stevenson, the Gentleman who is employed by the India Company as their Inspector of Small Arms, has wrote to Mr. Garbett, the 5th and 12th of May, 1789, that he laments the uncertainty of the Proof of Swords hitherto devised, and that he will cheerfully concur with Messrs. Boulton and Watt in recommending such Modes of Trial as they may prefer to the present.

Resolved,—That it doth not appear to this Committee, that it was necessary for Mr. Garbett to make any apology to the India Company, or to Mr. Stevenson, their Inspector of Small Arms, that Gentleman coinciding in Opinion with Mr. Garbett respecting the Proof of Sword Blades.

Resolved,—That it doth not appear to this Committee, that the Board of Controul ever required the India Company to make Enquiry about the Quality of any Swords ; nor doth it appear that the Board of Controul or the Lord Advocate knew anything about

Mr. Woolley's making Swords for the India Company, or that Mr. Woolley's Swords did undergo, and always had done, such Trials as to their fitness as was necessary for the Safety of the Troops who were to use them.

Resolved,—That it doth not appear to this Committee, that it was manifested in the most unequivocal Manner to Mr. Garbett, by the Lord Advocate (or in any Manner whatever), that Mr. Garbett's Representations were unfounded.

It was then resolved unanimously,—That, as Mr. Woolley left this Meeting before Mr. Garbett had made his defence to the second Charge, it appears to this Meeting that he thereby abandoned the Prosecution of the remaining Charges; but the Committee nevertheless thought it Justice to Mr. Garbett to permit him to go on with his Defence to the several Articles, that he might be relieved from the heavy Imputations of Partiality they contain, which, in the opinion of this Meeting, he has completely effected, and has shewn that he has been actuated by no ill-will towards Mr. Woolley nor unjust Partiality for others; but has done his duty for the protection and support of the Birmingham Manufacturers of Sword Blades, for which he deserves the thanks of this Committee.

Resolved,—That the Thanks of this Committee be given to Mr. Garbett for the essential service he has rendered to the Birmingham Manufacturers of Swords and to the Community at large, by the assiduous and exemplary Discharge of his Duty as Chairman of the Commercial Committee, and that he be earnestly requested to continue his Exertions in that important Station.

Resolved,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be also given to Mr. Francis Garbett, for his Attendance at the Board of General Officers, along with his Father, Mr. Garbett.

It being past ten o'clock, Gentlemen were requested to answer to their names, when there appeared present every Gentleman, as entered above, except those marked with a Star.

It was then unanimously Resolved,—That these Resolutions be printed in the public Papers, with the Names of the Persons who approved them.

The last fifteen Resolutions passed unanimously; but when the Meeting was closing, Mr. John Bingham desired it might *not* be understood that he approved of any Vote against Mr. Woolley, upon which the Chairman desired to know if there was any other Member that disapproved of any of the Minutes, as now was the time to speak, and to which no answer was given.

MATTHEW BOULTON, Chairman.

Audi alteram partem is simple justice. The supporters of Mr. Garbett have had their say; and his opposers were not satisfied. They entered the lists, and this is the counter statement :—

Birmingham, May 28, 1790.—We, whose Names are hereunto subscribed, Members of the COMMERCIAL COMMITTEE, in this Town, considering our Conduct at the Meeting held on the 18th of this Month misrepresented in an Advertisement, signed “Matthew Boulton,” and published in Aris's Birmingham Gazette and Swinney's Chronicle of this Week, feel it incumbent upon us to lay before the Public our Opinion of the Proceedings on that Business, together with our Reasons both for leaving the Room, and for objecting to the Resolutions which were passed.

First,—We cannot admit either the Wisdom or the Justice of resolving, that the Book which contains the Minutes of the Committee should remain in Mr. Garbett's Hands during the Consideration of the Charges exhibited by Mr. Woolley against him, because

it implies this Absurdity, viz., That the Person accused is the most proper to keep in his Possession everything that might tend to prove the Charges brought against him ; and that the Person whom the Committee had unanimously appointed from among themselves, with the Approbation of both Parties, to preside at that Time, was not fit to be entrusted therewith.

Secondly,—We by no Means consider the Chairman acquitted of any of the Charges brought against him ; but on the contrary conceive that, so far as Mr. Woolley was permitted to substantiate those Charges, they were fully proved ; which we will instance in the first Charge, where Mr. Woolley says, that Mr. Garbett was the Cause of the Birmingham Sword Cutlers violating an Agreement made between them and the German Importers of Swords ; in answer whereto, Mr. Garbett did not attempt to deny the Fact, but to justify it ; wherein, however, we think he failed, because the Engagement did not go to fix a Day of Trial, but only to prevent Collusion and to shew that the Birmingham Cutlers were ready and desirous of coming to Trial, by obliging themselves to make, within a limited Time, a certain Number of Sword Blades to a Pattern which was given them, that they might be produced when called upon for Trial ; and we cannot admit that the Thanks of the Committee to Mr. Garbett, two years ago, will bear the Construction which is put upon it in the Resolution upon the first Charge, being fully convinced that it did not, nor could respect the violating of the Agreement in Question, that Business not having been at all gone into till the adjourned Meeting, “that it was essentially necessary for the good of the Trade, and Satisfaction of the General Officers,” that the agreement should be broken ; nor can we think that it is good for any Trade that the Commercial Committee, or their Chairman, should interfere with the private Concerns of Individuals, and thereby prevent those Individuals from fulfilling the Engagements which they have made.

Thirdly. With respect to the second Charge, Part whereof Mr. Garbett also admitted, viz., that he had sent Mr. Gill’s Pamphlet to the Members, although he denied that it contained gross Untruths and notorious Misrepresentations, Mr. Woolley having proved one Untruth therein, by the testimony of a very credible and respectable Person, we think there was reason to conclude that he would have proved others had he been permitted so to do ; and as the Fact of distributing the Pamphlet, if it contained nothing but Truth, carried no Criminality in it, and if it contained Falsehoods the dispersing it was highly Criminal, so it was of absolute Necessity that the Proofs should be produced ; we therefore are confident that it was the Duty of the Committee to hear everything which Mr. Woolley could produce in support thereof, and that the determination of the Committee not to suffer Mr. Woolley to proceed, but to call on Mr. Garbett immediately for his Defence, was highly improper, partial, and unjust, and that such conduct in the Majority will fully justify us in the minds of all upright and impartial men for quitting the Room ; because it appears to us to be the first principle of Justice to hear all that can be advanced on both Sides, and that it is the highest Act of Injustice to prevent either the Complainant from substantiating his Proofs, or the Defendant from controverting the Facts ; and we judge it to be absurd in the extreme to decide on a Question after hearing the arguments on one side only ; we do therefore consider every Resolution, subsequent to this which we so pointedly reprobate, as falling under the Censure of Partial Decision.

Happy in the approbation of our own minds, and not doubting but we shall receive that of all impartial men, we regard neither the Number nor the Greatness of Opponents,

resolved ever to defend the Cause of injured Probity against Persecution and Oppression ; and considering ourselves, as Members of the Commercial Committee, entrusted by our Townsmen with the important concern of watching over their Interests and preserving their Liberties from every kind of Encroachment, we have, under that Impression, in this Instance exerted, and will on all occasions continue to exert, our Influence in preventing any Body of Men, however respectable, from interfering with the private concerns of Individuals, convinced that such Interference must be attended with the most pernicious consequences to the Commerce and Manufacture of this Place.

We should be wanting in justice to Mr. Woolley if we did not take this opportunity of returning him our Thanks, for the Part he has taken in this Business, being fully convinced that he has been actuated by no motives but such as are consistent with the Character of a Man of the strictest Integrity and Honour ; and we trust an impartial Public will do him the justice to believe that he has not been governed so much by an Attention to his private Interests, as by an ardent desire to prevent others from suffering hereafter the Inconveniences and difficulties which he has experienced.

W. Villers	Joseph Gibbs	Joseph Rabone
Rob. Coales	Wm. Walker	Thomas Green
Harry Hunt		

We, the undersigned, do also unite in commending the Propriety and Spirit of Mr. Villers's Conduct, in refusing to take the Chair, after the Indignity which had been offered him.

Rob. Coales	John Bingham	James Woolley
Harry Hunt	Joseph Gibbs	Thomas Green
Joseph Rabone	Wm. Walker	

I do hereby testify my entire Concurrence with every Part of the Preceding, except only that which is contained in the second Article.

THOMAS GRUNDY.

The monopoly of Copper was troubling the manufacturers at this time, and they were appealed to in the following brief, but sensible letter :—

May 17, 1790.—To the Manufacturers of Birmingham and its Neighbourhood.—At this eventful Period it is highly necessary, as Manufacturers, that you should think of extending your Views, and see the necessity of concentrating your Powers, so as to exert them in a collective Capacity for the general Good. The present Monopoly of Copper is of an alarming Nature, and calls aloud for your united Exertions to counteract its destructive Influence ; therefore, whatever is suggested as a Means to that end deserves your Attention.

The Mining and Smelting Scheme, now offered to your Notice, though a Lottery, yet, in the present Instance, is of such a Nature, as every Principle of Liberty and of Interest should stimulate you to support in proportion to your Abilities. The present high price of Copper, and the Danger of its being still advanced, added to the Certainty of having a Sale for whatever you may procure, ought to be considerable Inducements to you to embark in an Undertaking of this kind. Speculations in Canals, though ever so fortunate,

are not to be compared to the very great Advantages which would result to this Place from a successful Mining Adventure ; it would prove the happy means of emancipating yourself from the Shackles of Monopoly, a system which ought to be universally exploded. It would confer that Independence, in respect to so essential an article as Copper is to your Manufacturers, that you all ardently wish for—it would act as a new Invention in Mechanics, which by facilitating your different Operations enables you to sell your Articles upon such Terms, in foreign Markets, as to astonish your Competitors. These, and many other Reasons might be urged to shew at least the Propriety of investigating the proposed Plan and its Tendency. Let me intreat of you to be vigorous in your Efforts to free yourselves from the Tyranny of all Monopolists ; and let those who wish to cramp your Industry and your Ingenuity see that your Courage is equal to your Generosity, and that nothing can call that Courage so much into action, as unmerited Oppression.

A Friend to the Manufacturers of Birmingham.

Everything paid duty in those days ; everything was taxed, from the light of heaven to the powder on the hair and the gloves on your hands. Nothing escaped the lynx-eyed Chancellor of the Exchequer ; and the terrible French war had stomach for it all. All the money that could be obtained by extraordinary taxes and extraordinary loans was swallowed in that maelstrom of murder and mischief. One of the consequences of this universal system of taxation was the perpetual disturbance of trade. The glove trade was one of these. Persons were selling them without “stamps annexed, agreeable to Act of Parliament.” A meeting of the trade was held on this subject on April 28, and no fewer than forty dealers agree that they will not sell either gloves or mitts without the stamp. The following official notice is appended to the advertisement giving the result of this trade meeting :—

The Public are hereby informed that it is enacted, if any person buy any Gloves or Mitts, not having the Ticket affixed thereto, agreeable to the Act of Parliament, any Person selling the same and informing against the Purchaser, the Purchaser is liable to pay a Penalty of Twenty Pounds.

JOSEPH CLARK,

Receiver General of his Majesty's Stamp Duties
in Birmingham.

Our next extract contains the first notice of an important undertaking:—

September 6, 1790.—Notice is hereby given, that Application will be made to Parliament in the next Session, for an Act to enlarge the Powers of an Act made in the twenty-eighth Year of the Reign of his present Majesty, entitled “An Act for rebuilding the bridge over the River Rea, at the Town of Birmingham, called Deritend Bridge, and widening the Avenues thereto ; and for widening and varying the Course of the said River, near the said Bridge, and making a Weir, and other necessary Works, to prevent the lower Part of the Town being overflowed.”

The Birmingham people were ever active in works of charity ; and the year 1790 was signalized by the formation of a Humane Society. The fact is thus briefly recorded :—

September 6, 1790.—On Tuesday last several Gentlemen of this town, met at the Hotel for the benevolent purpose of establishing a Humane Society, similar to that in London, for the recovery of persons apparently dead by drowning ; and as subscription books are now opened, we doubt not every friend to humanity will contribute to support an institution which may be the means of saving many unfortunate persons from premature graves.

The advertisement gives us a fuller account of the establishment of this new charity :—

Birmingham Hotel, August 31st, 1790.—President : Dr. Parrott, in the Chair ; Dr. Gilby, Dr. Pearson, Mr. Sampson Lloyd, Mr. Charles Lloyd, Mr. Peter Capper, Mr. Tomlinson, Mr. John Ryland, Mr. James Taylor, Mr. G. Shipton, Mr. James Woolley, M. Theodore Price, and Mr. Villers.

Resolved,—That a Society be established under the Title of the Birmingham Humane Society, for the recovery of Persons apparently dead from Drowning, or Suffocation by any other cause.

That an annual subscription of Half-a-Guinea each be immediately entered into, for the Support of this Institution, and that Benefactions be also thankfully received.

That Books be opened for Subscriptions and Benefactions at the Banks of Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds, Robert Coales, Esq., and Messrs. Goodall, Dickenson, and Goodall, and at Mr. Pearson's, Printer, in the High Street.

That Rules and Orders, for carrying this benevolent Design into execution, be prepared by the Gentlemen present, to be laid before a General Meeting of Subscribers and other Friends to this Establishment, who are requested to attend at the Hotel, on Wednesday, the 15th of September, at Five o'Clock in the Evening, when a President, Committee, and proper Officers will be appointed.

That the above Resolutions be inserted in both the Birmingham Papers. F. PARROTT.

A public meeting of the subscribers was held on September 22, when the following rules and orders were adopted :—

Birmingham Humane Society.—September 22, 1790.—The great Success which has attended the Establishment of Societies in different Parts of the Kingdom, for the recovery of Persons apparently dead from Drowning, or Suffocation from any other Cause, have induced many Gentlemen to enter into a similar Society in this Town ; a General Meeting of the Subscribers, agreeable to Public Advertisement, was this Day held at the Hotel, Mr. Villers in the Chair, when the following Rules and Orders were unanimously agreed to, viz. :—

I. That for the proper Regulation of the Society, a President, a Vice-President, Treasurers, and Secretary be appointed annually.

II. That for the year ensuing, Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., be President.

III. Joseph Carles, Esq., Vice-President.

IV. Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds, Treasurers.

V. Mr. Tomlinson, Secretary.

VI. That every Subscriber of 10s. 6d. per Annum be a Director during payment.

VII. That every Benefactor of £5 5s. at any one Time, be a Director for Life.

VIII. That a Committee be Annually chosen for the general conduct of the Business.

IX. That the Physicians and Surgeons of the Hospital,

Dr. Pearson	The Rev. Dr. C. Curtis	Messrs. J. Ryland
" Parrott	Messrs. C. Lloyd	" G. Shipton
" Carmichael	" P. Capper	" Jas. Keir
The Rev. Dr. Spencer	" J. Taylor	" Jas. Watt
" Priestley	" S. Galton, jun.	" W. Villers

be the Committee for the Year ensuing ; but that it be nevertheless open to every Subscriber.

X. That a General Meeting of Subscribers be held at the Hotel, on the last Tuesday in August in every Year.

XI. That the Committee meet once a Month, and that their first Meeting be on Monday, the 11th of October, at Five o'Clock in the Evening, at the Hotel.

XII. That the Assistance of every Medical Gentleman in the Town be requested in all Cases that are the Objects of this Institution.

XIII. That proper houses be appointed near to the Canal and other Waters, in and about the Town, under the Direction of the Committee, for the Reception of Objects ; at each of which a proper number of Drags and the necessary apparatus for Recovery shall be deposited.

XIV. That notwithstanding the Appointment of particular Houses, the established Reward shall be given to the Occupier of every other House who shall take in Bodies and assist in the Application of Means for their Recovery.

XV. That the following Reward be given, viz. :—

To the Person who first gives Information at any receiving House, or to a Medical Assistant, of a body being drowned or otherwise suffocated, 2s. 6d.

To those who assist in getting a Body out of the Water, and afterwards for using for four Hours successively the Means prescribed for Recovery, £1 1s. which shall be equally divided amongst them.

To every Housekeeper who shall receive a Body, and furnish necessary Accommodation, £1 1s. ; and such Housekeeper shall be secured by the Society from any Charge of Burial in unsuccessful Cases.

In all successful cases an additional Reward of £1 1s., to be equally divided amongst the Assistants.

To every medical Gentleman by whose Means a Person apparently dead shall be recovered, A Silver Medal.

W. VILLERS, Chairman.

The Chairman having left the Chair the Thanks of the Meeting were unanimously given him.

Directions for the Recovery of Persons apparently dead are delivered Gratis, with the Birmingham Gazette, through the Town, and it is requested that all Publicans will have them pasted on a Board, and hung up in their Public Rooms, and that Housekeepers in general will also have them fixed up in some conspicuous Part of their Houses, and Manufacturers in their Shops.

This Society continued its useful and humane labours until the year 1803, when it was added to the General Hospital.

There was a Liberal Society in existence at this period, but we know nothing of its objects and aims. An advertisement appeared on September 20, 1790, stating that the half-yearly meeting of this Society will be held on the 22nd, at the Shakespear Tavern, and that dinner will be on the table at three o'clock. No report is published of this meeting, and it is most probable that the events of 1791 put an end to the existence of the Society.

One of the most active public men of the time was Joseph Carles. As early as 1787, an effort was made to provide some public recognition of his services, and in 1790 the subject was again taken up. The following advertisement gives the details :—

Birmingham, October 15, 1790.—IN compliance with the Solicitation of several respectable inhabitants of this Town, I insert the following Advertisement. viz :—

WHEREAS, many hundreds of principal inhabitants of Birmingham did, in September, 1787, sign a Letter to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Baronets, the Knights of this Shire, to the following Tenor, viz. :—

“To Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Barts, Knights of the Shire for the County of Warwick.

“Gentlemen,—This town and neighbourhood hath for many years been under great obligations to JOSEPH CARLES, Esq., as a very active Magistrate, and we lament that we have no means of testifying our gratitude in a manner that could be acceptable to him, as an adequate Compensation for the Expense he is at, not only in attending to the common Parish and County Business of the populous Parts of Warwickshire and Staffordshire, but by acquitting himself ably in those Arduous Exertions which the very numerous and daring acts of Felony in both Counties so frequently call for. We beg you will do us the honour to believe we are extremely sensible of the Impropriety of importuning your Attention to any object that is not of public Importance ; but we think it our indispensable Duty to intreat you to solicit his Majesty's Minister to give Mr. Carles some Testimony and Acknowledgment for his valuable Services, which it may be honourable for him to accept as a Gentleman, and which would be a handsome Compensation to him for the Expense which is unavoidably brought upon him by daily Applications to administer Justice, and frequently in very critical cases.”

And there being some reasons to believe that his Majesty's Ministers are inclined to grant that Request if a proper Opportunity should occur ; and as, in consequence of the Death of a General Receiver for this County, Applications are making to obtain that Post for other Gentlemen, a MEETING of principal Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood is requested at TEN o'Clock, at the HOTEL, TO-MORROW MORNING (Tuesday, the 19th instant) in order to take the Public Opinion, whether the King's Ministers should be applied to on this Occasion.

JOSEPH GUEST, High Bailiff.

This is a pleasant anecdote of a once popular man :—

November, 1790.—The liberality of Captain Lanley, now raising an Independent Company in this town and neighbourhood, appeared very conspicuous on Tuesday evening. A recruit who had enlisted, and who afterwards repented, requested to pay the smart. But the Captain on being informed that the recruit was a married man and had a young family, not only refused to accept the money, but gave him his discharge, and made his wife a handsome present. *A proof that humanity and fine feelings are ever attendants on the true Military character.*

The next extract affords us some information on the subject of the steel trade :—

Birmingham, November 4, 1790.—Copy of Resolutions entered into by a number of respectable Manufacturers in the Steel Trade, assembled at the Shakespeare Tavern.

Resolved 1,—That Manufacturers in the Steel Trade have sustained many Inconveniences, and the Trade much Injury, arising principally from serving foreign Merchants with unfinished Articles and separate Parts, to be finished Abroad.

Resolved 2,—That this has caused a great Demand for and an Advance in the Price of appendant Articles, all of which might have been obviated by an amicable Communication of the Manufacturers in general.

Resolved 3,—That by instituting a Society other Abuses may be prevented and Regulations adopted to the Advantage and good being of the Trade at large.

Resolved 4,—That a general Invitation be given to the Steel-workers of Birmingham and its Neighbourhood to enter into an amicable Society, for the purpose of endeavouring to prevent the Continuance of this ruinous Practice.

Resolved 5,—That it be recommended to the Society to restrict its Members from serving Merchants, Factors, Traders, Dealers, and Chapmen, with any Steel Articles, finished or unfinished, which are in themselves incompleat, or such as are intended as Component parts of a finished Piece of Steel-work.

Resolved 6.—That to prevent any unfair Practice that might be affected, either by Masters or Servants, that it be recommended, for the mutual Unity and Cement of the Society, that no Servant shall be employed without an application being first made to, or an Acquittal received from his, her, or their former Master or Masters.

Resolved 7,—That it be recommended to the Society to inform the Manufacturers of small Articles and appendant Parts of Steel work that such of them as shall hereafter serve Merchants, Factors, or other Traders abroad, with the above-mentioned Articles, that they will not be countenanced by any Member of the Society.

Resolved 8,—That it be also recommended to the Society that, immediately on their Establishment, a respectable Committee be appointed to wait on the Merchants and Factors of this Town and Neighbourhood, to desire their assistance in discountenancing and preventing the continuance of a Practice which must operate also to their Injury, and may ultimately tend to the Destruction of the Steel Trade in this Country.

Resolved 9,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Matthew Boulton, Esq., for his countenance and support.

Resolved 10,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Gentlemen of Wolverhampton for their promised Concurrence.

Resolved 11,—That 500 copies be printed and distributed.

Resolved 12,—That a General Meeting of the Steel-workers be convened at the Shakespeare Tavern, on Thursday, the 11th instant, at seven o’Clock in the Evening, to consider and finally determine upon the best Mode of Agreement.

Resolved 13.—That the Thanks of this Company be given to Mr. Amphlett, for his impartial conduct in the Chair.

A meeting was held on November 24, to “receive a report from the gentlemen deputed at a former meeting, held on the 19th of last month, to lay before the Minister, by means of the members for the county, the great and daily obligations which the county are under to Joseph Carles, Esq., and that they may also be informed of the opposition made to the application of the Town.” The report of this meeting was published on the 29th of the same month :—

At a numerous and respectable Meeting of principal Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood, called by public Advertisement, to receive the Report of the Gentlemen deputed at a former Meeting (held on the 19th of last month) to lay before the Minister, by means of the Members for the County, the great and daily obligations which the County is under to JOSEPH CARLES, Esq., and to be informed of the Opposition made to the Application of the Town :

Mr. VILLERS in the Chair :

Mr. GARBETT having read to the Meeting copies of some Letters he had wrote to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Barts., and Letters that he had received from those Gentlemen ; and Copies of Letters he wrote to the Right Hon. William Pitt, the 13th and 17th of October, and to Mr. Rose the 13th, 17th, and 21st of October, and 7th of this month :

Resolved, That the Chairman is desired to present the Thanks of the Meeting to Mr. GARBETT, for the manner in which he hath represented the Sense of the Town, and particularly in his Letter to Mr. Rose, the 7th of this month ; and that Mr. Garbett be desired to continue his Attention to the Subject.

Resolved, That the Meeting be adjourned, subject to the Call of the High Bailiff.

Resolved, That the Thanks of the Meeting be presented to the HIGH BAILIFF for calling the Meeting, and for his obliging conduct in the Chair. WILLIAM VILLERS, Chairman.

The town on the whole seems to have been well governed by its High Bailiff and two constables. From the numerous quotations made it will have been evident that they attended very carefully to their many and responsible duties. Our next extract is a further illustration of this fact :—

November 29, 1790.—The HIGH BAILIFF of the Town and Manor of Birmingham, gives this Public Notice to all Persons who sell Provisions of any Kind, whether in Shops or the open Market, as well as to all Publicians, and Dealers in Wines or Spirits, within the said Town and Manor, that he shall attend very minutely to the Weights and Measures used by them ; and is resolved not only to destroy all such as upon Examination at their respective Houses, Shops, Stalls, or Standings, he shall find deficient, but also to expose in

the public Papers of the Town and Neighbourhood, the Names of the Persons in whose Possession they are found.—And whereas it is notorious that many persons within the said Town and Manor, who sell Vegetables and Fruit by heaped Measure, have their Bushels, Pecks, and Gallons narrower in circumference than the Law and Custom of the Manor require; and therefore, although such Measures may contain as much stricken Measure as the Standard, they do not hold so much heaped; such Persons are hereby required immediately to procure other Measures of the Dimensions prescribed, viz. :—

	Inches.		Inches.
The Bushel.....	18½	diameter.....	8 deep within
Half Bushel	15	"	6½ "
Peck	10¾	"	6 "
Gallon	8½	"	5 "
Half Gallon	7	"	3¾ "

and none will be permitted to be used within the said Town or Manor that are of any other Dimensions; Directions being given to the Person who examines and marks them not to admit any others. And, that no one may be surprised with *unlawful* Weights and Measures in his Possession when the HIGH BAILIFF examines them at their respective Shops, &c., which he intends very speedily to do; they may in the mean time take those which they now use any Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, during the remainder of this Year, between the Hours of Nine and One, to the Public Office in Dale End, where proper persons will attend to compare them with the standards.

The Retailers of COALS are also to take Notice that as it has always been the Custom of this Manor for Coals to be sold by the long Hundred, or 120 lbs, they are hereby required to have Weights conformable thereto.

W. VILLERS, *High Bailiff*.

N.B.—Intimation having been given, that great Inconveniences arise from Hay not being brought to open Market in this Town, and that the Place used for the Horse Fair would be very convenient for Waggon and Carts to stand in, with Hay for Sale: if any Farmers will inform the HIGH BAILIFF that they are disposed to bring Hay in Loads, to that or some other proper Place for Sale, on some one or more Days in the Week, he will give public notice thereof, and encourage such a market to the utmost of his Power.

The desirable object was pursued with the usual energy; and on January 17, 1791, the High Bailiff published the following advertisement :—

Birmingham, January 15, 1794.—THE HIGH BAILIFF having consulted many respectable Persons on the Measure of establishing a Market for Hay and Straw in this Town, and finding them unanimously desirous that it should be effected, which induces him more zealously to exert every Means in his Power for that Purpose, requests a Meeting of all the principal Inhabitants, and particularly of all such as are well wishers to the Scheme and would support it, at the Public Office in Dale End, on Monday the 31st of this Month, at Ten o'clock in the Morning, to fix upon a place which may be best adapted for the holding such Market, to determine what Day in each Week will be most proper for the same, and to consider what further steps may be necessary for fully effecting the end desired.

W. VILLERS, *High Bailiff*.

N.B.—If the Meeting should be too numerous for the Room at the Public Office, it will be adjourned from thence to the Great Room at the Hotel.

The meeting was held, and as will be seen by a copy of the resolutions passed, it was agreed to establish a weekly market for hay, that it should be held (as it still is), on Tuesday, and that "Ann's-street, commonly called Mount Pleasant, is the best place for holding such Market." It was held there until the year 1817, when it was removed to Smithfield.

Birmingham, January 31, 1791.—At a numerous and very respectable meeting of the principal Inhabitants of this Town, held this day, at the Public Office, to take into Consideration the best means for establishing a MARKET for HAY and STRAW; Mr. Villers in the Chair; it was unanimously Resolved,

I. That the Establishment of a weekly Market for Hay and Straw, in this Town, will be of great Public Utility.

II. That this Meeting will encourage and support such a Market to the utmost of their power.

III. That Ann's-street, commonly called Mount Pleasant, is the best place for holding such Market.

IV. That such Market be held on Tuesday every Week, from Seven in the Morning to Two in the Afternoon.

V. That all Hay brought to the said Market, except it be such as never has been put together in a Rick, be made up in Trusses of 56lb. weight each, and that every Hundred Weight of Wheat Straw shall consist either of four Battens, weighing 28lb. each, or eight Battens, weighing 14lb. each, or 7lb each, at the option of the Farmer who brings it for sale.

VI. That the High Bailiff be requested to make the above-mentioned Resolutions effective by such means as he may judge proper.

VII. That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the High Bailiff.

In conformity, therefore, with the Request of so respectable a Meeting, the High Bailiff gives this Public Notice to all Persons who have Hay and Straw to sell, as well as to all such as shall at any time be in want of those Articles, That the first Day for holding a Market for Hay and Straw in this Town, will be on Tuesday the 15th of February, between the hours of Seven in the Morning and Two in the Afternoon, and that it be held in Ann's Street, commonly called Mount Pleasant, where he will attend in Person, with proper Assistants, to direct the said Market, and give Instructions for properly placing the Waggons and Carts which come loaded for sale, so as that both the Sellers and Buyers may be accommodated as much as is possible, and that the Public at large may not be interrupted in passing at the same time with any other Carriages.

And in order to obviate any inconveniencies which may arise from Hay or Straw being unsold at the End of the Market, a proper Place will be sought for, to which such Loads may be taken and safely deposited till sold.

WILLIAM VILLERS.

The first Hay Market was held at Mount Pleasant, on Tuesday, February 15, 1791. A brief report is given of the business done:—

February 21, 1791.—Our first Hay Market, on Tuesday last, was so well attended by Purchasers that several loads of Hay were sold as soon as they arrived; and it was found

unnecessary to take the horses from the waggons ; indeed, there were purchasers for more than double the quantity brought, and we have no doubt that this Market, which will be continued every Tuesday, will prove very advantageous both to the buyer and seller. The Prices were from 45s. to 58s. per ton. Several Persons wished to have bought Straw, and we hope that the next week some loads of that article will be brought to Market. We think it proper to observe, that the Hay which came in cart-loads or small waggons was most in demand, and that all the business was done between 9 and 12 o'clock.

The activity of the inhabitants at this time receives a further illustration in their efforts to establish new markets. At the meeting held to consider the question of the hay market, it was represented that an offer had been made "to supply the town with fish, on better terms, and in better condition than it is now supplied with that article." The subject was at once taken up, and it was resolved "That inquiry be made into the mode pursued at Sheffield, and that the High Bailiff be desired to call a meeting of the inhabitants on Friday the 11th inst. [February] at the Hotel, to take the same into consideration." The meeting was held on the 14th, and led to the following results :—

February 14, 1791.—At a very respectable Meeting of principal inhabitants, this Day, held at the Hotel, agreeable to public Advertisement, to take into Consideration an Offer which has been made of supplying the Town with Fish, on better Terms and in better Condition, than it is now supplied with that Article ;

It was unanimously Resolved,—That the procuring a better supply of Fish for this Market is extremely desirable.

That a Committee be appointed to make further enquiry respecting the Applications which have been made, to receive Proposals, and to digest a Plan to be laid before the Town at a future Meeting, as well as to obtain Subscriptions for the support of the Scheme ; and that Five be competent to Act.

That a Subscription be immediately entered into, that no less than three Guineas be admitted as a Subscription, and that no Subscriber be pledged for more than the sum he subscribes.

That these Resolutions be published four Times in each of the Birmingham Papers.

Whereupon the Gentlemen present immediately subscribed, which is to be open, nevertheless, to every Subscriber, and the first meeting thereof appointed to be held at the Swan, in Bull-street, on Friday next, the 18th of this month, at one o'Clock, when and where such persons as have any Offers to make on the Business are desired to attend.

A List of Subscribers is left at Mr. Pearson's and at Mr. Swinney's, where those Persons who wish to become such will please to apply.

W. VILLERS.

We must now retrace our steps a little, and return to November, 1790, at which period the practice of selling illegally covered buttons was rather prevalent. The ensuing extract affords us some information on the tricks of trade in the old time, and also of how much the government intermeddled with trade affairs :—

November 29, 1790.—BUTTONS ILLEGALLY COVERED.—A CAUTION against making or wearing of Buttons illegally covered. The Public are respectfully informed that many Thousands of industrious Men, Women, and Children are become almost destitute of Employment, by the general Use now made of Buttons unlawfully covered, and which from our Example is also become the prevailing fashion abroad : And though the Wearers in particular are daily subject to repeated Forfeiture, it is not intended to promote or give Countenance to any Informations for Offences previous to the 25th of December next, after which Time more effectual Measures for that Purpose will be pursued if found necessary.

That Persons therefore may not be taken unawares, the Manufacturers and Dealers in Twist, Metal, and other Buttons, give this Public Notice of their Intentions to enforce the Laws in this Respect against Offenders.

By an Act the eighth of Queen Ann, “any Taylor or other Person convicted of making, covering, selling, using, or setting on to a Garment any Buttons covered with Cloth, or other Stuff, of which Garments are made, shall Forfeit Five Pounds for every Dozen of such Buttons, or in Proportion for any lesser Quantity.”

And by an Act of the Seventh of George the First, “any Weaver of such unlawful Buttons is liable to the Penalty of Forty Shillings per Dozen, and in Proportion for any lesser Quantity.”

These Acts apply to all Buttons in general, whether with Shanks or without, and the Penalties therein mentioned are recoverable upon Conviction before one or more Justices of the Peace in the Neighbourhood where (and within one month after) the offence has been committed, and one Half thereof goes to the Informer.

The next extract refers to a subject, which, in after days, produced a great struggle between the people and the Government—the selling of unstamped almanacks. Persons are still living who have suffered imprisonment for this offence. Their firmness, however, procured a change in the law :—

On Thursday last Hannah Jackson, of Moat-lane, was convicted before the Magistrates of this place, of selling unstamped almanacks, entitled “Paddy’s Watch that never stands still, for 1791,” and the reward of 40s. was paid by the Printer of this Paper to the Person who gave the information that convicted her. The same reward is again offered to any person who shall apprehend or convict any other seller, or the printers of such illegal almanacks ; and the persons so convicted are subject to a penalty of £10., and to an imprisonment of three months in the house of Correction. As several quires of these illegal Almanacks were found in Jackson’s house, wet from the press, it is supposed the printer lives in this town or its vicinity.

The next quotation refers to the parish Church ; and it is clear that difference of opinion was very strong, when the proposition put by the High Bailiff was rejected by a large majority, in consequence of which he retired :—

January 31, 1791.—Saint Martin’s Church Birmingham.—At a very numerous and respectable Meeting held here this Morning, convened by Letter from the Church-Wardens

of this Parish, directed to the Proprietors of Sittings in the said Church, requesting them to meet to take into Consideration, and to determine on the Propriety of an Application to Parliament for a small Levy upon each Sitting, that a permanent Provision might be made for the Lecturer; and the Question upon that Occasion being put by WILLIAM VILLERS, Esq., the Chairman, and negatived by a great Majority, Mr. Villers retired, and Mr. WILLIAM SIMPSON was unanimously voted to the Chair; and the following Resolutions were then put and carried.

Resolved nemine contradicente, That a Committee of Twenty-one Gentlemen be appointed to examine into the State of the Subscription to the Lecturer of Saint Martin's Parish; to take into Consideration proper Plans to be adopted for increasing the same (if found necessary), and for the more easy collecting of such Subscriptions.

Resolved, That the following Gentlemen be appointed a Committee for the above Purpose, viz., The Church-Wardens for the Time being, Edward Palmer, Esq., William Villers, Esq., William Simpson, Thomas Hadley, William Hicks, Humphry Vale, Bernard S. Heaton, Thomas Gem, Charles Twigg, Joseph Chattaway, Edward Harris, Samuel Gem, Samuel Withers, Thomas Cheston, Thomas Cooper (High Street), Joseph Batteson, Samuel Glover, Thomas Green (New Street), and Thomas Bellamy, Sen.

Resolved, That these Resolutions be inserted in the next Birmingham Gazette, and signed by Mr. Simpson, the Chairman.

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

WILLIAM SIMPSON, Chairman.

A Meeting was held in February, 1791, to consider the desirability of constructing a Canal from Birmingham to Worcester. It was stated in the survey which had been made, "that there is coal contiguous to the present Birmingham Canal for a supply for 700 years, upon double the present consumption." Mr. Parker was in the chair, and two resolutions were passed, one declaring the statement satisfactory; the other that "an application should be made to Parliament for a canal from Birmingham to Worcester." Vested interests, however, were very sensitive about the proposal, and an opposition was organized. A correspondent, "not an inhabitant," points out the folly of such proceedings.

February 14, 1790.—INTENDED CANAL TO WORCESTER.—That any well-informed and real Friend to Birmingham should oppose a Scheme so pregnant with Advantage to the Town as a Barge Canal to Worcester, must appear to a disinterested Observer very extraordinary. Would not the Execution of this Plan give the Town almost every advantage of a Sea-Port, and pour into it the Produce of all Countries, at the easiest and cheapest Rate; and at the same Time take off its Manufactured Produce by the readiest and cheapest Conveyance? Would not the Execution of this Plan be a great National Improvement, of which the Town of Birmingham, from its local Situation and established Commerce, would have the first and best Chance of reaping the Advantage? The pretence of exhausting the Country of Coal is a mere Bugbear, that must vanish upon

Examination ; the Part exhausted in all past Ages, down to the present Time, bears a very small Proportion to the known Coal Country, being less than one thirtieth Part of it ; to say nothing of the Certainty of finding Coal in other Situations. If the Canal to Fazeley has raised the Price of Coal, such Advance must be merely temporary ; as no sooner is the Market well-stocked, by opening fresh Works, than the Article will find its Equilibrium.

Birmingham, from its Advantage in Point of Situation, must always have the command of the Coal Trade ; and the Bowels of the Earth furnish inexhaustible Quantities of this valuable and necessary Article, which will always find its Way to Market, so long as the Price will pay for raising it, and a small Profit to the Proprietor, which has not hitherto been the Case. It is surprising that a narrow and groundless Jealousy on this Head, so contrary to the liberal Spirit of an enlightened Age and Country, should at all interrupt a Scheme which would be the noblest improvement ever attempted in this Town and Neighbourhood ; which, by extending the Conveniences of Traffic and Commerce, would necessarily extend the Trade, and increase the Riches and Consequence of this Country.

NOT AN INHABITANT OF BIRMINGHAM.

In spite of opposition, however, the bill passed through both houses of Parliament, and received the Royal assent on June 10, 1791. The local laureate of the time thus celebrated the event :—

August 1, 1791.

Song on obtaining the Birmingham and Worcester Canal Bill.

Come now begin delving, the Bill is obtain'd,
The contest was hard, but a conquest is gain'd ;
Let no time be lost, and to get business done,
Set thousands to work, that work down the fun.
With speed the desirable work to compleat,
The hope how alluring—the spirit how great ?
By Severn we soon, I've no doubt on my mind,
With old father Thames shall an intercourse find.
By int'rested motives tho' people are led,
With many the ground who from fancy may tread ;
'Twill prejudice stifle, and malice strike dumb
When the seat of the Arts shall a sea port become.
Redditch, where the sons of the Needle reside,
Who commerce revere, and make friendship their pride
The prospect enraptures—and Bromsgrove no less,
Has cause at the victory joy to express.
In Europe's great Toy-Shop, how pleasing 'twill be,
Well freighted the trows, and the barges to see ;
The country 'twill charm, and new life give to trade,
When the seat of the Arts shall a sea port be made.
With pearmain and pippins 'twill gladden the throng,
Full loaded the boats to see floating along ;
And fruit that is fine, and good hops for our ale,
Like Wednesbury pit-coal, will always find sale.

So much does the rage for Canals seem to grow,
 That vessels accusom'd to Bristol to go,
 Will soon be deserting Sabrina's fair tide,
 For shallows and shoals sailors wish to avoid.
 As freedom I prize, and my Country respect,
 I trust not a soul to my toast will object ;
 "Success to the Plough, not forgetting the Spade,
 Health, plenty, and peace, Navigation and Trade."

The Seat of the Arts, July 4, 1791.

J. F.

In March of this year there was a dispute in the brush trade. The masters made this general apology :—

Birmingham, March 2nd, 1791.—The BRUSH MAKERS of this Town think it necessary to make a general Apology to their numerous Customers, for not being able fully to execute their kind Orders with the same Dispatch as heretofore, on account of the great Scarcity of Workmen in the Trade. All due Encouragement will be given to Journeymen that will apply from other places, and also to a Number of Boys as Apprentices ; such as can be well recommended, of honest Parents, may apply to

Jn. Woodcock

John Holt

Daniel Grove

Jn. Baswell

Wm. Hodgetts

Benj. Walton

Tho. Robinson

It was not until August that the men appealed to the public, and in that month the following statement was published :—

August 15, 1791.—From the Journeymen Brush-makers to the Public. The Journeyman Brush-makers of Birmingham thinking some Advertisements which have lately appeared in the public Papers, have a Tendency to give an unjust Idea of the present Situation of the Trade, respectfully take the liberty to state the Circumstances which have given Rise to the Advertisements alluded to.

The Brush Trade of Birmingham has never employed more than forty-three Journeymen at any Period ; indeed, when so many were in the Town their Situation was rendered very uncomfortable, and a Prospect of continued Employment very precarious. This induced some of them to leave the Town in search of Situations that promised more Certainty.

The Wages paid to Journeymen Brush-makers are remarkably low ; and now less than what is paid in many neighbouring Places. Provisions, and also every other Necessary of Life, being advanced one half in the Price within a few years, and no Advance having taken Place in their Wages, made them consider their Situations as peculiarly hard. They, therefore, in the beginning of last Spring, solicited their Employers to make a small Addition to the Price of some Articles, which they agreed to. Some of them, however, after this Agreement (though the Advance did not amount to one-tenth part of what they advanced the Articles to the Public) frequently expressed themselves dissatisfied. And in the month of June last, an Advertisement appeared in the Birmingham Papers to the following Purpose, "Wanted, a Journeyman Brush-maker, and five or six Apprentices," &c. The Men in this Gentleman's Employ, knowing this to be in direct Contradiction to the established Custom of the Trade, and having Reason to think this

extraordinary Measure was taken with a view to reduce their Prices, informed him, "that if he persisted in his determination they would quit his Service." After some Consideration, he made the following Proposal to them, viz., "That if six of them would be bound to serve him for one year, he would allow three of them the Work of an Apprentice each for six months; and the others a Sum of Money equal thereto." This was accepted by them, on Condition that he should not take more than these three Apprentices, nor Employ any illegal Journeymen: this Proviso he agreed to, and legal Articles were executed, and are now in force between the Parties. Notwithstanding this solemn Engagement, there is every reason to believe that this Gentleman is principally concerned in a large Manufactory now establishing, where several Apprentices are already taken, and more Persons upon Trial.

The Person who is at this time establishing this large Manufactory, after informing the Public that he has declined his Wholesale Trade to the Person above alluded to, adds that "he has taken a large Warehouse and Shops, for the Purpose of introducing a considerable number of hands into the Trade," &c., and requests his Friends to address their Retail Orders to himself and Co. It will appear somewhat strange to every Reader, that a Person who, by the Labour of a few Hands, has been able to supply both his Wholesale and Retail Trade, and yet it should require a Company of Persons to superintend only this same Retail Trade.

At the Expiration of the Servitude of these considerable Number of Apprentices, they must, as well as the present Journeymen, experience the Difficulties attendant upon a Trade being so far overstocked with Workmen.

BENJAMIN BOOTHBY,
JOHN STOCK.

Illegally covered buttons were still sold despite the penalties. On March 21, we read that "a tradesman in London was fined last week nearly £26 on two informations for selling" these articles; and in April this additional caution was published:—

April 4th, 1791.

COVERED BUTTONS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Advertisements which have been inserted in this and several other Papers, cautioning all Persons against making, selling, setting on, using, binding, or wearing Buttons or Button-holes, made of or bound with Cloth or Stuffs, wherewith Clothes are usually made, it is with regret observed, that Persons still continue to wear Buttons so covered, in Defiance of the several Statutes passed respecting the same; and the Committee appointed by the Manufacturers of Buttons in this Town for putting the said Acts in force, having determined to prosecute the Wearers of such illegally covered Buttons, as the most effectual step that can be devised for putting an End to the Evil, Notice is hereby given, that such Prosecutions will be immediately commenced against such Wearers (however respectable they may be) for Recovery of the Penalties incurred by the Violation of the said Acts. Therefore if any Person or Persons will give information against any such Wearer or Wearers, so that such Wearer or Wearers shall be convicted thereof, he or they shall upon such Conviction be handsomely rewarded.

That no Person may plead Ignorance of the several Acts of Parliament, Extracts therefrom are subjoined.

THOMAS GEM, Solicitor to the Committee.

It is not often that a town asks for a tax. We have seen this marvel in our own day, when the burgesses adopted the Free Libraries and Museums Act, and willingly taxed themselves for books. In 1791, our fathers also met and suggested a tax; but then it was a tax on dogs. The report of this meeting appears on March 21 :—

On Tuesday, at a numerous and respectable meeting of the principal merchants and inhabitants of this town, it was suggested that a tax upon dogs would be highly beneficial, and the Chairman was desired to recommend to the Committee, appointed at a former meeting, to prepare heads of a bill for the better regulating the poor in this parish, to have a clause inserted for that purpose.

Many farmers in the parishes of Edgbaston and Harbourne have, for some time past, been considerable sufferers by several of their sheep and lambs being worried and killed by dogs in the night. This affords another strong argument in favour of the wished-for tax.

We have already noticed the steps taken by the leaders of public opinion in these days to express their appreciation of the services of Mr. J. Carles, whose name has been frequently before us. This gentleman thus acknowledges the kindness of his fellow-townsmen :—

April 11, 1791.—To the respectable Inhabitants of BIRMINGHAM and its NEIGHBOURHOOD.—The various public Testimonies you have given of your sense of my Conduct as a Magistrate, is amongst the most flattering Circumstances of my Life; and I beg you will do me the Honour to believe that the *voluntary* Respresentations, which I understand you have for some Years made to the Knights of the Shire respecting my Services, I shall ever very gratefully remember; and rejoice in all Opportunities of showing that,

I am, your faithful Servant,

Brown's Green, April 9, 1791.

J. CARLES.

I am indebted to my friend Mr. J. Rabone, jun., for the following information in reference to the early Swedenborgians. He says, "The first building ever erected for the Swedenborgians in England, or indeed in any part of the world, was in Birmingham. The Chapel in New Hall Street, now known as Zion Chapel, was built by them for their own use, and was consecrated and opened on the 19th of June, 1791. The officiating ministers were the Rev. James Hindmarsh, of London, and the Rev. Joseph Proud, and they each wore, on account of its symbolic meaning, 'an inner purple silken vest, and also an outer garment of fine white linen, having a golden girdle round the breast.' Their leading doctrines were stated to be a belief in 'the sole and exclusive divinity of Jesus Christ; the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures; and goodness of life.' Dr. Priestley, who was on terms

of intimacy with Mr. Proud and several of the leading members of the congregation, was present at the consecration services; and he afterwards published his *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, in opposition to some of their views. It is known that 'the Dr. was just on the point of sending the *Letters* to the printer's when the rioters besieged his house, and they were destroyed with the rest of his papers.' He afterwards however re-wrote them in London, and Mr. Hindmarsh published his *Letters to Dr. Priestley*, in reply to those 'celebrated productions' as he was pleased to designate them. Woodfall, in his *Diary*, September, 1791, says, 'it is somewhat remarkable that the general dislike to Dr. Priestley is not so much in consequence of any innovation he may wish in the State, as on account of his religious creed of believing in *one supreme and eternal God*.' Within one month of its opening, the new church narrowly escaped the fate of the Old and New Meeting Houses. During the Riots of July the mob proceeded to New Hall Street, and were about to commence their work of destruction upon the building, but owing to the presence of mind of the minister, the Rev. Joseph Proud, who lived at the house adjoining, now No. 35, Newhall Street, they were turned from their purpose. A collection had been made in the church on the preceding day, and Mr. Proud, standing on the elevated steps at the front of his house, threw the money among the crowd, informing them, in a brief but energetic address, that the minister and worshippers were neither Unitarians nor inimical to the Government. A shout was raised, 'the New Jerusalem for ever!' and the mob passed on without doing any injury. On another occasion, towards the close of the year 1792, a hand grenade was thrown through one of the windows into the building, but with the exception of the partial destruction of a large and very costly cut and gilded glass font, and the destruction of several of the pews, no other damage was sustained.

On September 21, the Liberal Society held their half-yearly meeting, and had a dinner at the Shakespeare Tavern. There is no report of their proceedings.

The Jews' Synagogue used to be in that very questionable part of the town at the back of Peck Lane, known as the Froggery. The New Street Railway Station occupies the site of both of these once infamous

localities, and their names are, happily, all that remain of them. A new Synagogue had been built, and this brief notice is all we have of its dedication :—

September 26, 1791.—On Friday last, the ceremony of dedicating the newly-erected Jews' Synagogue, in this Town, was performed by Mr. Phillips, Mr. Yates, and Mr. Levy, who sung the appointed Psalms and Songs in the Sacred Language with great judgement and melody.

The laudable effort to supply the town with fish was practically begun in this month. On the 17th we read :—

The scheme for supplying this town with fish, at a cheaper rate than we are accustomed to have it, commenced last week ; on Tuesday, and on Saturday morning a quantity of each sort of fish arrived in very fine condition.

It found an instant sale, and the supply was not equal to the demand. Cod was sold at 4d. the pound, and other fish proportionably low.

Ashted Chapel was opened on the 9th of October ; and we have the following account of the event :—

October 17, 1791.—At the opening of Ashted Chapel, on Sunday, the 9th instant, several select pieces of sacred music were performed. Mr. Clark did great justice to the organ, which proved a most excellent one. Mr. Saville also exerted his uncommon powers and exquisite taste. Mr. Birch was much admired, and the band in general (which was very full) had great merit, and gave the performance every possible support. Notwithstanding the weather was extremely unfavourable, the chapel was crowded with a very genteel congregation, who united in the highest tribute of applause to the taste and spirit of Mr. Brooke, the proprietor, and to the abilities of Mr. Smith, the minister, who preached a very suitable and elegant sermon on the occasion, which was delivered with energy and effect. Such are the attractions of this place of worship, that there is no doubt but it will ensure a genteel and numerous attendance ; and, it is to be hoped, will amply re-imburse Mr. Brooke the very heavy expense he has been put to in its completion.

This is supplemented next week by this curious paragraph :—

October 24th, 1791.—We do not recollect to have witnessed a more general and polite attendance at the opening of a public place of worship, than has been given to Ashted Chapel. Notwithstanding the extreme unfavourableness of the weather, the very crowded congregations, and the number of kneelings already engaged, evince the attractions which are united in the elegance of that building, the ability of the Clergyman, and admirable effect of an excellent Vocal Band (in accompaniment with the Organ), and which we understand will be increased with a considerable addition of voices.

The next four extracts all relate to that very important subject to Birmingham—the metal trades. There had been a considerable advance in the price of brass, copper and tin, and a correspondent sends the following list of queries :—

October 17, 1791.—To the Printer of *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*.—Mr. Pearson,—

In your extensively circulating and very useful Paper, I shall be obliged by your giving a Place to the following *QUERIES*, which are respectfully submitted to the Consideration of the Metal Button-makers in Birmingham by J. H.

In consequence of the former, and a recent Advance of Five Pounds per Ton on Brass, as well as the Rise of Tin, Spelter, Brass Wire, &c., is it not highly reasonable, nay absolutely necessary, that some step should be taken to relieve the Manufacturers of White Metal Buttons, who are thereby very much injured?

2. What is best to be done to effect that, so as not, at the same Time, to injure the Merchants?

3. Would it be prudent for a few of the leading Men, such as Messrs. Dimcombe, Gibbs, Ruston, Hammond, Timmins, &c., to call a general Meeting of Manufacturers?

4. Can any better plan be devised, or one more likely to be more generally acceded to, than an Agreement to lessen the Discount five per Cent.?

5. Will the foreign Market or home Trade be injured by this, or a similar Alteration?

6. Is it at all probable, that a reduction of the Discount would create any serious Competition abroad, in manufacturing the Article of hard White Metal Buttons?

Next week this short note appeared :—

Birmingham, October 24, 1791.—Mr. Pearson,—It would give great satisfaction to many of the Manufacturers of this Place, if some Person, conversant in the Copper Trade, would favour them (through the Medium of your Paper) with the Reason for the late Advance in the Price of Copper.

A MANUFACTURER.

Next we have this thoughtful letter on the subject :—

November 7, 1791.—To the Manufacturers of Birmingham, who are Consumers of Brass.—The Writer here begs to submit to your serious Consideration a few plain Facts which cannot, he presumes, be the less interesting to you all because they are self evident and uncontrovertible. The Price of Brass, every Consumer is too sensibly convinced, has risen within the last 18 Months Ten Pounds per Ton, and a very respectable Proprietor of Copper Works has hinted that there is every Probability of a still further Advance; in this case the Manufacturer has no possible Redress, without materially deranging his Business by making an Alteration in his Discount; this, at all Times, proves vexatious to the Merchants, and injurious to the Manufacturers. If, however, by an Union of Sentiment and Interest among the principal Consumers, a Plan could be devised (and such a one appears perfectly practicable) to keep the Market of this necessary article permanent, it must be allowed on all Hands to be a most desirable Circumstance; the Writer hereof, therefore, earnestly suggests it to the Consideration of those interested how far an Extension of the Brass Works already established in this Town may be eligible and publicly beneficial, or whether the Establishment of a new Work, on a more extensive Scale than either of the present, so as to have for its Object the making of a Quantity of Brass (including the Produce of the Works now in Use) equal to the Consumption of the whole Town, be not a more desirable Plan to adopt in the present Instance. As the Process of making Brass has long ceased to be a Mystery, all Objections on that head are completely obviated, and if these Hints meet the Approbation of the Consumers, it is submitted to them to decide upon the Propriety of a General Meeting to further these important Purposes.

One more letter concludes this series. The questions asked by the Manufacturer of brass were not answered in 1791 :—

November 14, 1791.—To the Printer of the *Birmingham Gazette*.—Mr. Pearson,—It is with Pleasure I see in your Paper on Monday last an Address to the Manufacturers of Birmingham, on the Subject of Brass. Oppression will ever prompt to Resistance; but it becomes necessary to trace the Grievance to its Source, which will be found not to originate with the Makers of Brass. Within the last eighteen Months Copper has advanced in the same Proportion, and that being the Basis of Brass, it would be satisfactory to see an Answer to the Query in the former Paper of the 31st of October, under the Signature of a Manufacturer, respecting the Cause of the Advance of Price in that Article.

A CONSUMER OF BRASS.

The next notice gives us the exact position of the Cattle market, and also alludes to practices which we should think were dangerous as well as inconvenient :—

November 28, 1791.—Public Notice.—All Persons who shall in future expose neat Cattle for Sale in this Town, are hereby required to confine themselves to the Market Place, which by the Street Acts is directed to be held between the Public Office in Dale End, and the End of Chapel-street, and not elsewhere; and every Person exposing to Sale neat or other Cattle in any other Part of the said Town, are subject to a Penalty of 5s. for every such neat or other Cattle so exposed as aforesaid. And whereas great Inconvenience having been sustained by the Public, and particularly by Ladies, in consequence of Bakers and others riding along the Footpaths, it was at the last Meeting of the Commissioners resolved, that the following Clause in the Act of Parliament should be inserted, cautioning all Persons against committing such Offences in future.

It is enacted, “That if any Person or Persons shall roll any Cask, wheel or drive any Wheelbarrow, or wilfully ride, drive, or lead, or cause to be rode, driven, or led any Horse or other Cattle on any of the Footways within the said Town, other than in Cases of absolute Necessity, such Person or Persons shall forfeit and pay for every such Offence the Sum of Two Shillings and Sixpence.” And the public are hereby informed that proper Persons are appointed to lodge Informations against Offenders for the Recovery of the Penalties inflicted by the above mentioned Acts.

By Order of the Commission,

WILLIAM SMITH, Clerk.

From the next advertisement we learn that it was, up to this date, the practice not to hold markets during the Christmas holidays. It is strange that a custom which must have been exceedingly inconvenient should have continued so long :—

December 19, 1791.—Markets in the Christmas Holidays.—The High Bailiff (at the request of several principal Farmers, Mealmen, and Others, who attend the Birmingham Market on a Thursday) hereby informs the Public, that in future the Markets will be held as regular during the Christmas Holidays as at other times; judging this will be an Accommodation to the Public, whose interest it is his Duty and Wish to promote. He takes this Opportunity of thanking the Persons who have addressed him by Letters without Signatures, concerning People who are suspected of selling by short Weights and Measures; he assures them he will attend to the Business they call his Attention to, and

at all Times thinks himself obliged to every Person who will take the Trouble of informing him of any Persons guilty of improper Practices in vending marketable articles.

Birmingham, December 16, 1791.

THO. ARCHER.

Great consternation was caused at this time among the thousands employed in one of our important staple trades. A change of fashion threatened to banish the far-famed buckle. The manufacturers and artisans were naturally alarmed, and the practice of tying shoes was declared to be "unmanly, absurd, and ridiculous." The people thought, as they have often thought since, that the countenance of royalty might change a decree of fate. The buckle was doomed, although on May 3 of this year we read "the manly buckle," says a correspondent, "has nearly exterminated the most ridiculous of all ridiculous fashions, the effeminate shoestring, except amongst a very few incorrigible *petit maitres*, against whom the shafts of ridicule are pointed in vain,

'For sure no meaning puzzles more than Wit.'

But men whose daily bread depends upon a certain trade may be pardoned if they do not look upon the subject in a calm and philosophic manner, and may be praised if they try manfully to defer the evil day as long as possible. This is what our fathers did, and here is a report of an old deputation :—

December 26, 1791.—BUCKLE MANUFACTORY.—On Wednesday last, several respectable manufacturers, deputed by the Trade in general from this Town, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, waited upon his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, at Carlton-house, and were introduced to an audience by Mr. Sheridan. The purport of their attendance on the Prince was conveyed in a petition setting forth the distressed situation of thousands in the different branches in the above trade, from the fashion now and for some time back so prevalent of wearing Shoe-strings instead of Buckles. His Royal Highness, after considering the petition very attentively, replied to the deputation in a manner most gracious and condescending, and expressing himself in terms of the greatest kindness and sympathy towards the sufferers by the decline of so important an article of manufacture, promised his utmost assistance to them by his example and influence, and assured them that the mode of tying the shoes should not be adopted by any person in his Royal Highness' household.

His Royal Highness the Duke of York has, with the utmost affability, promised to co-operate with his Royal Brother in this most beneficial measure.

We hear that the Buckle-makers of London and Westminster are preparing Petitions to the Throne, beseeching the King, as the father of his people, to interfere in preventing so useful and industrious a class of his subjects becoming a prey to want and indigence, through the prevalence of a fashion at once unmanly, absurd, and ridiculous.

On the same day the following editorial notice appeared :—

December 26, 1791.—When Government laid an additional duty upon all Newspapers, it will be remembered by our Readers that the new regulation was attended with restrictions which tended very much to curtail the profits of the Proprietors. On this account, added to the great increase in the price of paper, and capital required, all the London prints found it absolutely necessary to raise their price to *Four-pence*, and have declared that no *good and really independent* Newspaper could be published for *Three-pence half-penny*. The Publishers of the Country papers, however, desirous of not adding, if it could be avoided, to the cost of their customers, did not make the advance; but the experience of upwards of two years has convinced the majority of them that, in publishing their papers at Three-pence half-penny, they have suffered material loss. Some of them, therefore, have given notice that at the commencement of the new year they must indemnify themselves by an advance upon the price of their Advertisements; others have thought it more eligible to follow the example of the London Prints, and raise the price of their paper; which mode being the least partial in its operation, the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette adopts, and respectfully acquaints his friends that his next Gazette will be published at *FOUR-PENCE*.

Trusting, in the present instance, to that candour and generosity which he has always experienced from the Public, the Printer is persuaded his readers will be aware of the justness and reasonableness of the moderate advance he is compelled to make, when they consider that almost all the London prints (*without being subject to any charge for circulation, loss by, or wages of newsmen, or carriage of stamps*) are vended in the country at *FOUR-PENCE HALFPENNY*; and that there is not a paper in the kingdom which contains so much matter, or is attended in its publication with such heavy expense, as the *BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE*.

And thus closes the annals of the public events of ten years, which may be pronounced among the most important and fruitful in the history of the town.

§ 3. EDUCATION AND LITERATURE.

This decade was especially distinguished by its literary activity. The controversies, political, social, and religious, which produced so much excitement, and led to such disastrous results, kept the printing press perpetually at work. Dr. Priestley's prolific pen was engaged in all branches of literature except poetry. His pamphlets and volumes followed each other with extraordinary rapidity. Many of them provoked replies; and a paper war, in which of course, the clergy were the principal combatants, was waged with considerable fury and much letterpress. Most of these productions have little interest for us now. Time, and a truer appreciation of religious freedom, and the right of not mere tolera-

tion, but equality in spiritual affairs, have produced a different state of things ; and the tracts of that period of bigotry and narrowness are left to moulder on the shelves of our libraries, only to be consulted by the student or omnivorous reader whom not even the dulness, virulence, and uncharitableness of the religious controversies of the end of the eighteenth century can deter. A reference to a catalogue of Birmingham books, will show how numerous were the works written and published in this town between 1781 and 1791.

The first extract we have to quote relates to the fine arts. A once famous picture was exhibited in January, 1782, and on February 18, this advertisement was published :—

The Picture representing the Fainting of the late illustrious Earl of Chatham in the House of Peers, having met with the Approbation of People of the first Taste and Judgment in this Town, it will continue to be exhibited this Week, and no longer, at the Assembly Room in the Hotel.

A fact so awful and interesting as the one represented in this Picture, cannot fail to excite the attention of the Public. Upwards of Fifty Portraits are contained in it, consisting of the Peers in their Robes, the Right Rev. the Bishops, and the Great Officers of the State. In the back Ground is introduced the Throne, with a distant View of the Spanish Armada ; the whole forming a Scene equally grand and elegant.

As the Exhibition of this Picture will positively close this Week, in order to gratify the Curiosity of every ingenious Mechanic, they will be admitted for 6d. each : Ladies and Gentlemen 1s. Catalogues Gratis.

Science was not altogether neglected, but although lectures were few and far between, when a course was given it was generally a long one. Thus, on June 10, a course of thirteen lectures on Chemistry was announced as follows :—

To be opened at Cook's Coffee-house, Cherry-street, Birmingham, on Wednesday next, the 12th June, at Six in the Evening, A Course of Thirteen Lectures upon General Chemistry ; including the Theory and Experiments agreeable to the latest Discoveries.—Subscribers pay One Guinea for the Course, and may send Substitutes.—Non-Subscribers pay 2s. 6d. for every Lecture they attend.

There is no report of the lectures, nor do we know if they were successful or not. On April 21, 1783, a rather remarkable poem was published, entitled *Local Remarks*, in which some of the characteristics of the town are noticed ; and there are clear evidences that the writer was a man with his eyes open and his wits about him. The lines printed in italics are as true of our own time as they doubtless were in that of the writer :—

April 21, 1783.

LOCAL REMARKS : A POEM.

Hail Birmingham for Artists so renown'd,
 Whose modern Fame doth through the World resound
 The useful Article and pleasing Toy,
 Its fertile Geniuses alike employ :
 Which to complete they do no Labour spare,
 That Merchants through the World may send their Ware,
 And Orders bring to carry on the Trade,
 Which here is on such spacious Basis laid,
 That all alike whatever they devise,
 (Un-charter cramp'd) may freely exercise ;
 But Idleness will find no Sanction here,
 For men of Business they all revere ;
 And when hereafter Men rehearse its Fame,
 They'll speak a TAYLOR* and a BOULTON's Name,
 Who here the most ingenious Artists drew,
 And did the most extensive Plans pursue ;
 Regardless of whatever might impede,
 They pushed with Ardour 'till they could succeed :
 When others seeing what they did acquire,
 By their example, burnt with equal Fire ;
 Which in the Arts have such Improvements made,
 And to the Town brought such extensive Trade,
 To find employ for all that hither come,
 Who think it well to leave their Native Home.
 Then, as such Blessings may attend the Scheme,
 'Tis strange that Men the Motive should misdeem,
 Or strive to quash what (fully understood)
 So pregnant does appear with public Good ;
But Men there are who ever will impede
All public Matters which they do not lead ;
 A Plea, to which some Men of Sense appeal
 For their not acting in the public Weal,
 And is the cause of Parish Policy
 Being so justly marked with Infamy ;
 But as Improvements now are taking Place,
 A little time may wipe off the Disgrace ;
 Then who on it may after choose to write,
 The Subject will (no doubt) give much delight.

As belonging to the fine arts as well as to the manufactures of the town we may quote here the following advertisement. Copies of this

* This is the gentleman mentioned with such enthusiasm by Hutton. He says, "Part of the riches, extension, and improvement of Birmingham are owing to the late John Taylor, Esq., who possessed the singular power of perceiving things as they really were. The spring, and consequence of action ; *whom we may justly deem the Shakspear or the Newton of his day.* He rose from minute beginnings, to shine in the commercial hemisphere, as they in the poetical and philosophical.--*History of Birmingham*, pp. 73-74.

medal are extant, and we learn that it is a highly creditable example of this beautiful work :—

August 4, 1783.—MEDAL OF DR. PRIESTLEY.—This Day is published, in Gold, Silver, and Bronze, taken from the Life and Executed by J. G. Hancock, Birmingham, an Elegant and Striking Medal of DR. PRIESTLEY. The Reverse of which represents some of the Doctor's newly invented experimental Machinery. Sold by John Thornton, near St. Bartholomew's Chapel; Messrs. Richards, High Street; Piercy and Jones, Printers and Booksellers, in Dale End; and Mr. Phipson, New-Street, Birmingham; by whom Merchants, Factors, and others, may be supplied with any Quantity on the Shortest Notice.

Some idea of the scientific knowledge of the time may be formed from this account of an "Uncommon Phenomenon" whose appearance disturbed the propriety of the town and the country generally in August, 1783 :—

August 25, 1783.—The uncommon Phenomenon which appeared in the Heavens about Nine o'clock on Monday last, was observed by several Persons in this Town and Neighbourhood. We have likewise accounts of it from all the Adjacent Counties, and particularly from a Gentleman who contemplated it in all its Radiance and Awfulness from Stourport Bridge. Its appearance seems to have been universal throughout the Kingdom, though greatly different in Form and Magnitude, and variously represented by each Person according as it was noticed by him from the point of view where he was situated. It passed over this Town in a horizontal direction of N. to S. having a Diameter of about 12 inches or more, and reflected a Light exceeding the full Moon's in her greatest splendour. Its Motion was nearly equal to the Swiftmess of the flying of a Bird, and it left behind a Trail of luminous Globes which gradually disappeared. To some it seemed to fall to the Ground, while others represent it as vanishing at once in the Air. We have endeavoured to collect some account of the Nature and Cause of this extraordinary Meteor; and the following seems to be the most probable. In the first place it was caused by inflammable Air, of which a great Abundance is discharged from stagnate Pools, and as this Air is lighter than our Atmospheric Air, hence, like a Cork in Water, it rises to the upper part of our Atmosphere in a combined State, and Lightning being much more frequent in the upper Parts of our Atmosphere than nearer the Earth's Surface, a Flash of Lightning would set Fire to this Inflammable Air, then it would burn for a considerable Time, and Action and Re-action being equal and contrary, the Fire blazing from this inflammable Air would cause such a Re-action in the Air as to give it Motion, and so it would continue burning, moving, and casting a long Tail of Fire behind as it went, till all the Inflammable Air was burnt away, and then we should lose Sight of it, like a shooting Star (as they are very vulgarly and erroneously stated) for both these phenomena arise from the very same cause; the only difference being that one is on a much smaller scale than the other.

Mr. Booth delivered his instructive and entertaining course of Lectures on Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Astronomy, &c., in the Autumn of this year.

The following brief account of an invention will be interesting to the gun trade :—

May 24, 1784.—An ingenious Artist in this Town (an eminent Compass-maker) has lately invented a Magazine Gun, that will discharge 45 Balls separately in two Minutes and a Half; each Ball would kill an Ox at 40 Yards Distance. It is only charged once, and Aim is taken with more Certainty than with the common Fowling Piece.

In July a day of general thanksgiving was appointed, although it might be difficult to find a sufficient cause for rejoicing. Birmingham, however, with the rest of England did rejoice. John Freeth (under his pseudonym Free) contributed to the mirth on that occasion. The “ingenious mechanic” alluded to in the introduction to the poet’s song was Mr. Tutin, the inventor of the Tutanian button.*

August 2, 1784.—The following, amongst other songs upon the occasion, was sung before a numerous company on the Thanksgiving day, by that well known songster of the times, J. Free; at the same time many constitutional toasts were given in honour of the day, by that ingenious mechanic of whom it has been so justly said he

“Makes a song and forms a buckle
Whilst a pipe’s between his lips.”

Sons of Trade, for mirth prepare,
Banish sadness, banish care,
With your fires who ne’er look’d back,
(Courage tho’ they scorn’d to lack)
When they found affairs go wrong,
Quarrels ending, thus they sung,
“Drink and set your hearts at rest,
“Of a bad bargain make the best.”

War, at best, makes evils flow,
Public debts and taxes grow,
And commotions will create,
When ambition sways the State :
Since for what’s been sent in vain,
’Tis but folly to complain.
“Drink and set your hearts at rest,
“Of a bad bargain make the best.”

TUNE—*Come ye party jingling swains.*

Now no more to distant lands,
Britain hastes her hostile bands ;
Pleasing sounds abroad are spread,
Commerce rears her drooping head,
And to crown the peasant’s toil,
All around does plenty smile.

* Freeth celebrated this invention by a song, which will be mentioned in the chapter on that poet.

Whilst her blessing Peace imparts,
 Hear the music of the arts ;
 Harmony that never ceases,
 Lathes and hammers, stamps and presses,
 All their various powers display,
 Concert joining through the day.
 Builders now your plans extend,
 To your projects there's no end ;
 Noble make the town appear,
 Large and lofty mansions rear ;
 Birmingham's immense increase,
 Best will tell the fruits of peace.
 Through the land may gladness reign,
 And Hibernia join the strain ;
 In our ports for every wind
 Kind that blows, may Britons find
 Vessels with their sails unfurl'd,
 Trade and Peace with all the world.

In November, Mr. Pitt, "by particular desire," gave his second course of scientific lectures, embracing Optics, Pneumatics, Gravitation, the Air Pump, Pendulums, the expansion and cohesion of Metals, and similar interesting subjects.

Birmingham also produced a little original music. The announcements of this kind are exceedingly few. We have only met with two during this decade.

December 6, 1784.

CHURCH MUSIC.

This Day is published, Eight Anthems, in Score, for three and four voices, adapted to the Use of Country Choirs. Composed by James Kempson, of Birmingham, by whom they are ready to be delivered, at his House, No. 51, Great Charles-street. Price to Subscribers 5s., which Subscription will be continued open to Christmas next, after which there will be an Advance.

* * This will not be continued.

On June 6, 1785, this important literary announcement was made :—

It is proposed to publish some Original Essays, in the manner of the Spectator, by a set of Gentlemen of this Town and its Neighbourhood. The first Number (which is intended as a Specimen) will be printed on Saturday next, Price Two-pence ; and those Persons who are desirous to encourage the Undertaking are respectfully informed that the Printers hereof will receive any Letters or Papers calculated for this Work, which is designed for general Advantage, and will be entitled The Tutor.

In 1787 another circulating Library was opened :—

March 19, 1787.—LITERATURE.—M. and S. Olds respectfully inform their Friends and the Public that they have opened a Circulating Library No. 13, Suffolk-street, Birmingham,

consisting of a variety of Books, in History, Voyages, Novels, Romances, Adventures, Poetry, Plays, &c., which will be lent to read on the following Terms:—Twelve Shillings per Year; Seven Shillings the Half Year; Four Shillings per Quarter; Six-pence per Week; or at Two-pence per Volume; and should their Endeavours meet the Support and Patronage of the Ladies and Gentlemen in or near Birmingham, they will annually make Additions to their Collection, so as to make it a general Repository of useful and entertaining Literature.

N.B. Stationery and Perfumery of all Sorts.

One of the forms which the local literature took at this period was that of mortuary verses. These are quite common, and some of them are very curious:—

VERSES *on the late* MR. TOMLINSON.

By an Old Friend.

To mitigate the sorrows of the heart,
To ease the mind of every anxious care,
To rouse the noble passions, or impart
The lenient hand of comfort to despair.

To fling the pointed gibe, or raise the joke,
With "mirth and laughter," truly, all thy own,
To charm the *witty* and the *wise* provoke
Was never *Wight* so able and so prone.

Oft times when grief deprest thy lively fort,
Some lab'ring wit would strive to sink thee lower;
As apt you'd check him with a fine retort,
And, tow'ring, "set the table in a roar."

When cheerful melody and song went round,
How apt thy spirits would to these accord;
Or when you pressed on scientific ground,
What sweet instruction did thy words afford.

When old Britannia's sons her pow'r withstood,
Contemn'd her mandates, and revil'd her laws,
How greatly would'st thou, with a rapid flood
Of eloquence, command applause!

For sprightly sense, and patriotic zeal,
And generous ardour ever to maintain,
Thy private friendship, and the public weal,
"I shall not look upon thy like again."

Birmingham, Dec., 1784.

Mr. Tomlinson was one of the earliest surgeons of the General Hospital. "He was appointed four months after the opening, upon the resignation of Mr. Ward. He may, therefore, be fairly ranked among the first-appointed surgeons. It is a well recognized tradition,

in professional circles in Birmingham, that Mr. Tomlinson was one of the most expert operators of the time.”*

One often wonders who the worthies were who were thought deserving of such immortality. For instance, in March, 1788, died a certain Job Hart, and the universal Freeth paid a tribute to this “truly facetious” man. “But where are his gibes now? his gambols? his songs? his flashes of wit that were wont to set the table in a roar?” Alas! nothing is known of him but what we learn in these few lines by his old friend :—

April 7, 1788.

On the death of the truly facetious MR. JOB HART.

DEATH, who to all must give the fatal stroke,
Has struck the Hart, that once *was heart of oak*,
For many years whose animating powers,
Kept constantly alive the evening hours.
Prince of convivial mirth, with friendship stored,
Fountain of humour at the social Board;
The heart to gladden would his fancy rove,
And could the muscles of a STOUT move.
By what so freely from his bosom flow'd,
As all he pleased, by all 'twill be allow'd;
Take him when cool, or take him when half mellow,
For ready WIT, he has not left his FELLOW. F.

A few more mortuary verses of this decade may be quoted here. We have previously mentioned the lectures on Heads delivered by Mr. Alexander Stevens—he was called “celebrated” in his own time, though probably but few persons have heard of him since. He died in September, 1784, and these lines were his eulogium and his epitaph :—

On the death of the celebrated G. ALEXANDER STEVENS.

Poor Stevens, alas! thy Head is laid low,
Who all Heads has lectur'd upon;
The tribute though just is small to bestow,
To say an Original's gone.

On the 20th of April, 1785, died Mr. Reynolds, an attorney, of this town, and the following impromptu accompanied the announcement of his death :—

His term-time is ended, his last brief is read,
And the great debt of nature he early has paid.

* The Birmingham General Hospital, and the Tricennial Musical Festival. By [J. T. Bunce.] p. 51.

Who was the "truly humourous James Cooke?" We only know that he lived and died, and found a friend to write these commendatory lines. If they are only half true, all we can say is that we should have had much pleasure in knowing James Cooke :—

January 23, 1786.

On the death of the truly humourous MR. JAMES COOKE.

Of mortals dispos'd now and then to get mellow,
For true comic humour there's not left a fellow ;
Diversion his fancy was won't to divide,
And oft times with pleasure he sought the brook side,
At sun-set with fondness would lap up his twine,
And then trip as fondly to Comus's shrine ;
His *face* was the *index* of jocular mirth,
Which always to laughter was sure to give birth ;
With the cares of the world very seldom held strife,
And lived—*truly lived* all the days of his LIFE.

Miss Poynton, the blind poetess of Lichfield, has been quoted from before. She married a Birmingham tradesman, named Pickering, and on the recovery of King George the Third, in April, 1789, the loyal lady indited these lines* :—

April 20, 1789.

SONG ON THE KING'S RECOVERY,

By Mrs. P. Pickering, late MISS POYNTON.

To my aid, O ye Muses, with cheerfulness throng,
While I sing of great George who can best grace my song ;
By his people no monarch was e'er held so dear,
For his people must love, whom all nations revere.
CHORUS—Since our Sovereign just Heav'n has rais'd, let us pray,
Long live our good King, and Jehovah obey !

How oft did his subjects, with tears and with sighs,
Invoke the great Sovereign of earth, sea, and skies,
Their much belov'd Monarch again to restore ;
The request he has granted—what can be wished more,
CHORUS—But that health, rosy health, may on him daily smile,
And long may he live to grace this fair isle.

With what transport the Queen, her great Consort must hear
Converse on each topic, with intellect clear !
And how bless'd now this land, since again he can sway
The sceptre of reason !—then let us all pray,
CHORUS—That Heav'n may on him its choicest gifts show'r,
Unrivall'd in goodness, unrivall'd in pow'r.

* A copy was lately sold in London to the British Museum Library

Let all ranks of people in gratitude join,
 To the great King of Kings, and Physician divine ;
 Who has to this kingdom such mercies now shown,
 Restoring the King, and confirming the Throne.
 CHORUS—Let each loyal Briton join chorus and sing
 Long life to Queen Charlotte and George our great King.

She was paid back in kind. The following lines inform us of the lamentable condition of the gifted, but unfortunate lady :—

May 17, 1789.

Lines addressed to Mrs. P. PICKERING, New Street, (late Miss Poynton) a Poetess of Nature, who has been blind ever since she was Twelve Years old.

To thee the tribute of my thanks be paid,
 Sweet Philomela ! warbling in the shade !
 To thee the rolling seasons ne'er disclose
 The vernal cowslip nor the summer rose ;
 From thee the moon withdraws her silver light ;
 To thee the burning blaze of noon is night.
 Yet has great nature, tenderly unkind,
 Thy vision darken'd, but illumed thy mind.
 Fancy, the dear enchantress, still supplies
 Suns of her own, and brighter, purer skies.
 Pitying, she taught thy sprightly harp to play
 Full many an artless but mellifluous lay,
 To cheer life's DARKLING PILGRIM on her way. }
 Forbid, great God ! thy glorious works to see,
 She lifts her sightless eyeballs up to thee ;
 To thee she listens, cheerfully resign'd.
 Father of light and life protect the blind !

A FRIEND TO MODEST MERIT.

Although -blind, she was not idle ; but assiduously cultivated the ability which she possessed. A second volume of poems from her pen was thus announced :—

June 22, 1789.—Mrs. PICKERING, of New-street, Birmingham (late Miss POYNTON, of the City of Lichfield), begs Leave to acquaint her numerous Friends and the Public in general, particularly the Ladies and Gentlemen of Birmingham, that she intends speedily to publish, by Subscription, a neat Pocket Volume of POEMS, price Five Shillings ; containing a great Variety of grave and gay Subjects, never yet published, so interspersed as to relieve each other ; and inasmuch as the Author sustained many Losses in the Year 1770, through unavoidable Contingencies, she hopes each Person will be so kind as to Pay Two Shillings and Sixpence on subscribing, and the remainder on the Delivery of the Book ; and as she has from twelve Years of Age been deprived of that inestimable Blessing, Sight, she flatters herself the candid Reader will not expect her Works to be embellished with learned Quotations : her Thoughts will wear no other Dress than that of simple Nature, since to her alone she stands indebted.

Ye Critics, then, with Candour read my lays,
 And nobly pity her you cannot praise,
 For since the little Knowledge I have gain'd
 Has been from Nature, simple Nature drain'd,
 Let Charity's fair Veil, ye Critics, cover
 Those Imperfections Judgment may discover.

N.B.—Subscriptions taken in by the Author, at Mr. Pickering's, Saddler, New-street, Birmingham, and by Pearson and Rollason, and Mr. Swinney, Printers.

This curious volume was edited by Mr. Joseph Weston, of Solihull. The poetic contributions, or "effusions," as they were more properly called, of the Editor, and Mr. John Morfitt, occupy considerably more space than those by Mrs. Pickering. Of the poems of the unfortunate lady, the specimens already given will satisfy the reader. Of Mr. Morfitt and his literary labours we shall have to say more in a succeeding chapter. The following verses, entitled an "Elegy on Reading George Barnwell," will suffice as a specimen both of manner and matter of Mr. Weston:—

Elegy on Reading GEORGE BARNWELL.
 No more let buskin'd heroes sweep the stage,
 Nor purple tyrants swell the solemn shew,
 While the mind shudders at their frantic rage,
 But feels no pity for the pomp of woe.
 Ye scenes of terror chill no more my heart ;
 Let humbler woes employ the tragic pen :
 More useful lessons humbler woes impart ;
 For few are MONARCHS, but we all are MEN.
 When youth and beauty unsuspecting fall,
 The dupes of cunning, and of guilt the prey,
 The tear humane obeys the tender call,
 And artless pity sighs her soul away.
 Yes, generous breasts ! 'tis virtue then to grieve ;
 Heav'nly the drops that fall on yonder bier :
 One pitying sigh severest breasts may heave,
 And stern-ey'd justice drop one pitying tear.
 Poor ruin'd Barnwell ! much I mourn thy fate,
 By fiery youth and female arts undone ;
 Great was thy crime, and thy temptation great :
 I mourn thy fate, and tremble for my own.
 Youth of the brightest hopes and firmest truth,
 What could thy mind to horrid murder move ?
 Thou once wast spotless, and thy early youth
 Was dear to virtue, Barnwell, dear to love.

Home to my heart thy fatal failings come ;
 How can I stand the syren pleasure's call ?
 The youth who mourns thy ignominious doom,
 Like thee has passions, and like thee may fall.

Full well the weakness of the heart I know,
 When youth impels it, and when beauty warms ;
 Beauty whose magic glances can bestow
 On vice such graces, and on ruin charms.

With thee, Maria, will I drop the tear ;
 And what hard heart shall bid our sorrows cease ?
 Shall we not join a felon's lips in pray'r,
 And bid a murd'rer's ashes sleep in peace.

A very important step in education was made this year. On October 4, 1790, we read that "the Governors of King Edward's Free School, in this town, have very laudably opened an evening school in their rooms in Shut-lane, for the instruction of forty boys in writing and accompts ; another school is also opened at Mr. Peel's, in Great Charles-street, for twenty boys."

It will be seen by this that the idea of having evening schools in connection with the Free Grammar School is not a modern one. Such schools existed in 1790, and it is to be regretted that they were ever discontinued.

We now come to the record of a noble work of art—the stained glass window in St. Paul's Chapel. On January 10, 1791, the following paragraph appeared :—

We have a pleasure in announcing to the public the completion of that masterly performance of a window in stained Glass, intended for the Altar-piece of St. Paul's chapel, in this town, designed by B. West, Esq., and executed by Mr. Francis Egginton, for the sum of 400 Guineas ; a consideration by no means adequate to its value. To defray the expense of which, a subscription was commenced four years ago, and about the sum of 250 Guineas was then subscribed. The window only awaits the necessary preparation, which will be ready the beginning of April next. In the mean time, further subscriptions will be solicited ; and it is hoped that all encouragers of the arts will be inclined to patronize a performance which must stamp the highest credit on the eminent ability of the Artists, and reflect a lasting honour on the town of Birmingham.

Two important events are recorded in the next extract—the opening of the window, and the new organ :—

March 28, 1791.—It is with great pleasure we can now with certainty announce to the Patrons of the Arts, and to the public in general, that the much admired window of stained glass, representing the Conversion of St. Paul (executed by Mr. Francis Egginton,

of Handsworth, near this place), and intended for St. Paul's Chapel, will be opened in the ensuing Easter Week, on which occasion select pieces of sacred music will be performed on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. It is also in contemplation to have two Grand Miscellaneous Concerts at the Theatre in the evenings of the same days, and we are authorised to say that the committee, appointed to conduct this musical celebrity, are determined to spare neither pains nor expense to render it highly acceptable to the public. Amongst other principal vocal performers already engaged, are Signora Storace, Mrs. Second, and Mr. Saville; and among the instrumental are Messrs. General and Charles Ashley, Clark, Harris, Mahon, Bird, Rudge, and Birch. An organ, made by one of the most eminent builders, for the use of St. Paul's Chapel, will likewise be opened on the above Festival.

Everyone will regret to learn that this performance was unsuccessful. In May this notice appeared :—

The painted window in St. Paul's Chapel, may be seen at any Time by applying to Mr. Cobbe, the Clerk, near the Sign of the Britannia, St. Paul's-square.

As the late Musical Performances, intended to defray the Expenses incurred by this Undertaking, were unproductive, it is hoped that those Gentlemen who are desirous of encouraging the Arts and patronizing Merit will generously come forward, unsolicited, and leave their Subscriptions with the Printers; there being at this time more than 200 Guineas wanting to complete the Committee's Engagement with the Artist, and to defray the other unavoidable Expenses.

Mr. Egginton returned thanks for the patronage bestowed upon his work :—

Birmingham, May 2, 1791.—Mr. Egginton begs leave to return his most sincere thanks to those Gentlemen who have so generously patronised the ALTAR-PIECE in Saint Paul's Chapel; and assures them that he receives much Happiness from the Approbation which they have been pleased to express of his attempts to merit their Encouragement; and has only to hope that the Public in general will candidly allow the Difficulties attendant on the Execution of his Work to apologize for its Imperfections.

A Society for Free Debate was established in 1789, but the only record of its existence which I have been able to discover is a card of admission for October 15, 1792, which is amongst the rich collection of Birmingham Memorials in the Old Library. It is a very prettily engraved card, and printed in two colours. The following is a copy of its contents :—

In veri investigatione versamur.

SOCIETY FOR FREE DEBATE.

Instituted in Birmingham, 1789.

On Monday Evening, October 15, 1792, *The following Question will be debated—“ Was Brutus justified in killing Caesar ? ”*

The President takes ye chair precisely at Half-past Seven o'clock. No Member to introduce more than two Ladies or one Gentleman.

There was a very large number of books published in this decade, including many of Dr. Priestley's best works ; some of Hutton's gossiping volumes, as well as his History of Derby ; and two volumes, entitled Flights and Inflaters, or the Sallies, Stories and Adventures of a Wild-geese Philosopher, by that very wild-geese of a writer, Mr. Nicklin, the author of the Trifler.

§ 4. AMUSEMENTS.

The world goes up and the world goes down
And the sunshine follows the rain,

sings the Rev. C. Kingsley, and something of this uniformity may be found in the amusements of a people. Changes occur in the minor games instituted *pour passer le temps*, and the improvements in the tastes, and habits, and feelings of a people may prohibit the more brutal sports of a ruder and rougher generation, as in the case of bull-baiting and others, or relegate them to the blackguards and ruffians of the day to follow in secret and at the peril of being sent to gaol, as in the case of cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and pugilism. But the main features of the amusement of a nation remain in principle pretty much the same from one generation to another. Chief and best among these permanent sources of pleasure are the drama and music, and these we find taking an important place, and exercising an important influence on the social life of all time. The agitation to obtain a license for the Birmingham Theatre reveals the interest which a large portion of the people of the town took in the subject.

Some of the theatrical paragraphs published in the old *Gazettes* are very curious. They appear in the editorial columns, and are evidently furnished by the actors themselves, or their friends. The character of these laudatory effusions attracted the attention of outsiders, and in August, 1782, the following admonition appeared :—

From the continual Theatrical Paragraphs in our Paper, a Correspondent says, that one would be led to suppose Mr. Sheridan had produced his Critic for the sole Use of the Profession, as they seem to have taken his Hints, and employed them with some Degree of Success. We have had Examples of the Puff direct ; the Puff preliminary ; the Puff collateral ; the Puff collusive ; and the Puff oblique.

The eulogies were frequently written in verse, and on the 5th of August these lines were published on a once famous actress :—

To MISS SATCHELL.

When we behold that fascinating Face,
Where Beauty smiles with *unaffected* Grace ;
When we survey that Symmetry of Form,
That Shape—that might an Anchoret's Bosom warm ;
Why gaze we breathless ?—Can such Transport flow
From Beauty *only* ?—mere *external* Shew ?
No, lovely Maid !—'tis thy diviner SOUL
Shines through thy Form, and animates the Whole !
(The Crystal Casket thus delights the View,
While thus the brighter Diamond sparkles through !)
No Wonder that thy Face is heavenly fair—
The Features of the MIND are pictur'd there !
'Tis more than Sense—'tis VIRTUE that we spy,
Beaming with *chasten'd* Splendor from thine eye ;
'Tis MODESTY that, blushing on thy Cheek,
Can, without Tongue, so eloquently speak ;
Each Look, each Smile, with *Sense*, with *Meaning* fraught !
Each Gesture—SENTIMENT ! each Motion—Thought !
Well pleased, the Muse has seen full many a Tear,
From many an Eye, bedew thy Juliet's Bier.
She sees—she hears thee *now*—Polonius' Child—
With Step disorder'd, and with Action Wild,—
With *such* a Look—and *such* a Melting Tone,
As Younge—nay Cranford, might not blush to own !
But oh ! thy Adelaide !—th' Assassin's Steel
That tears thy Bosom, in our *Hearts* we feel !
How strange the Magic of thy *dying* Strain,
That gives us Rapture—in the Shape of Pain !
Thus Philomel laments her cruel Wrong,
(Her Breast against a Thorn) in piteous Song ;
And thus the *sweet Complainer* can delight,
With her sad Sounds th' attentive Ear of Night !
Yet thee Melpomene's sublimer Art
Engrosses not :—Thalia claims a Part !
But, in such varied Excellence—where most
T' applaud, I hesitate ; in Wonder lost !
(Form'd since thou art—in *ev'ry* Shape to please—
To sing—dance—laugh—or weep with *equal* Ease !)
But vain th' Attempt my feeble Voice to raise—
Unheard, amid the Burst of UNIVERSAL PRAISE.

The following exhibition was announced on June 9, 1783 :—

To Admirers of the Wonderful Productions of Nature.

Just Arrived and to be seen in a commodious Room, No. 108, Welsh Cross, THE SURPRISING DWARF,* from Durham, 21 Years of Age, and only Thirty-two Inches high. Also the famous Miss BAGGS, from NEWFOUNDLAND, born without Arms, and will work with her Toes in as compleat a Manner as with Arms and Hands. She also cuts Watch Papers.

Likewise a large and curious Collection OF ROYAL WAX-WORK. I. A most remarkable Likeness of their present Majesties in Miniature.—II. A most striking Likeness of the Prince of Wales, as large as Life.—III. Charlotte, Princess Royal of England, laying on a Bed of State. This curious Piece has attracted the Attention of the greatest Virtuoso of the present Age, as she moves her eyes as if really alive.—IV. The most ferocious Bajazet, Emperor of the Turks. This Prince, after he had carried the Terror of his Arms through the whole Eastern Empire, was conquered by Tamerlane the Great, King of the Tartars.—V. The unfortunate Orpasia, Sultana to the Emperor Bajazet. This Princess was contracted to Moneses, a Christian Prince, but falling into the Hands of Bajazet, through the chance of War, was forced by the tyrant to marry him. With her Attendants.—VI. Flora the Goddess of Flowers, who is most curiously adorned with all the Emblems of Spring.—VII. Diana the Goddess of Hunting, adorned with Emblems of the Chase. With other Curiosities.

The theatre opened for the season of 1783 on June 9, and the following Prologue, written by Mr. Hull, was spoken by the author on that occasion. The local allusions are worth noting :—

As Travellers who quit their native Home
Thro' distant Climes and various Scenes to roam,
Make ONE the darling Object of their Care
And feel their best Affections centre there ;
So I re-visit this experienc'd Place,
Endear'd by Marks which Time can ne'er efface ;
O'er past Events, tho' Years on Years may roll,
Unhurt remains what's written on the Soul,
Once near this Ground, the Muse, with hov'ring Wing
And sweetest Melody, was wont to sing ;
Too long the polish'd Bosom must deplore,
A Lyttelton and Shenstone, now no more ;
Yet Hagley and the Leasowes still retain
Some Relics of the dear, delightful Strain ;
Nor can their Beauties ever be forgot,
Since grateful Genius guards the fav'rite Spot.
While War sent wide his terrible Uproar,
And Devastation stalk'd from Shore to Shore,
What Warbler of the Grove had Heart to sing ?
Silent and sad they droop'd, with ruffled Wing ;
Arts, Industry, and Commerce all decay,
While that fair Tyrant bears oppressive Sway ;

* This was probably the famous Borulawski, as his life was issued in Birmingham about this time.

But now returning Peace begins to Smile
 And shed enliv'ning Hope around our Isle,
 O! Let the Muse resume her ancient Seat,
 The long-wished Dawn with her soft Warblings greet.
 And, while the Drama's useful scenes repay
 Th' industrious Artisan's o'er-laboured Day, }
 Permit one Wish to mingle with her Lay;
 That Peace with choicest Gifts may bless this Plain,
 Where Industry and Arts unrivalled reign.

Here is another eulogy on one of the many now forgotten celebrities :—

To MISS STAGELDOIR, on seeing her in the Dance called the BUTTERFLY; and afterwards in the Character of WILLIAM, in ROSINA.

ADORN'D with every attractive Grace,
 When we behold you first advance,
 The Loves directed every Pace,
 And led you through the mazy Dance :
 Thus, when in Woman's gay Attire,
 Sweet Stageldoir, you tread the Stage,
 Each Swain with Instant Love you fire,
 And every beautiful Nymph with Rage.
 But when in WILLIAM's humble Guise
 We view your unaffected Ease,
 And simpleness delight our Eyes,
 And all your rustic Graces please,
 Each Bosom different Passions move ;
 Some magic Charm around us plays,—
 The Female Heart begins to love
 And all the Men with Envy gaze.

Birmingham, July 7, 1783.

VIATOR.

The last night of the season of 1783 was for the benefit of Mrs. Robinson, when the Miser was performed. It appears that this lady had previously made an unsuccessful appeal to the public, a fact to which she thus alludes in the advertisement containing her second appeal :—

Mrs. ROBINSON'S Benefit (happening unfortunately to be the first) failed to answer the Expectation of her Friends ; the Managers have therefore most politely given her a second Opportunity.

This "opportunity" was a favourable one, as we gather from the following rather gushing expressions of her thanks :—

September 15, 1783.—MRS. ROBINSON presents her humble Respects to that *uncommonly* brilliant and crowded Audience, whose Appearance on Monday Night in her Favour must ever be regarded by her as a Mark of the most flattering APPROBATION, and as a Proof of the most exalted BENEVOLENCE.

To those many—*very* many Friends, whose kind Intentions were frustrated by their being, unfortunately, too late to secure Places in the Theatre, her warmest acknowledgments are also due.

To the Politeness and Liberality of the MANAGERS she considers herself as *peculiarly* indebted. The only Alloy to such heart-felt Satisfaction is—the Consciousness that no Language which *she* can adopt—and, indeed, *no Language in the World*—can do Justice to her *Feelings* on this Occasion; but she hopes that, when she has the Honour and Felicity of appearing *again* before her indulgent and ever-to-be-revered Patrons, the still happier Exertions of maturer Judgment may afford more *substantial* Evidence of her Gratitude for such unmerited Goodness than it is in the Power of *Professions* to afford, however ardent or however sincere.

In June, 1784, a performance was given for an object which would not be out of place now. Managers might in this case follow the precedent thus set them with advantage.

Annual Night for Ornamenting the Theatre,
(By their Majesties' Servants)
At the Theatre in New Street,
Birmingham,
This present Monday, June 28, 1784,
Will be Presented,
A Comedy, called,
The Miser.
Lovegold (the Miser) by Mr. Yates,
(Being his first Appearance this Season.)

In looking over these old theatrical advertisements we are more than ever struck with the words of Shakspeare when alluding to the ephemeral nature of life, he compares it to

“A poor player,
Who struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.”

How many of our readers have ever heard of the following lady? And yet in her day she was a woman of some note.

July 26, 1784.—Mrs. Whitfield presents her humble respects to the ladies and gentlemen of Birmingham, having had the honour of appearing before them for four years, and never having before troubled them, she hopes it will not be thought presumptive in her soliciting their patronage on Wednesday next, which is appointed for her benefit; and as she has upon various occasions experienced their indulgence and urbanity, she now hopes for an opportunity to acknowledge their support. Mrs. Whitfield thinks it incumbent on her to declare she would not have thought of obtruding her name on the public for a night, but that she was in possession of two new pieces which she meant to produce, but Mr. Colman has positively refused to let them be done; this she was not aware of till it was too late to give up her night. She begs leave to inform them the play of Oronoko, as it now stands corrected and pruned of every exceptionable passage, by David Garrick, Esq., is one of the most affecting and moral dramatic pieces on the stage.

Mr. Southern, by every critic of taste and judgment, was declared the most pathetic writer of his time ; his play of *Isabella*, in which Mrs. Siddons has made so great a figure, is an extant and convincing proof of his genius ; yet, notwithstanding his intimacy with the Tragic Muse, his powers in Comedy were equally commanding, which, according to the fashion of that day, he has most happily blended in the present play ; the story is founded on a well known fact. The Farce of *The Devil to Pay*, written by the late Henry Fielding, of facetious memory, author of *Tom Jones*, &c., &c., is too well known to need a comment.

Mr. Hull seems to have been the laureate of the theatre. On the 1st of September of this year the following Epilogue, written by him, was spoken by "Mr. Powell, at his benefit."

With my Napkin and Book, double arm'd I appear,
To pay my best thanks to all visitors here.
As Merc'ry of old, in celestial Abodes,
Took Charge of the Feasts and the Wines of the Gods,
Spread the Cloth, set the Glasses, was all Things in One,
And at ev'ry Guest's bidding would skip, fly, and run,
Yet sometimes, beside the Castalian Spring,
Would deal in soft Numbers, quote Verses, and sing ;
So a like Kind of complicate Duty is mine,
I now serve up Sentiments—now serve up Wine.
I am not quite so thin as the feather'd Cyllenius,
Nor so able to fly—nor, by much, so ingenious ;
Yet in Zeal, ev'n with him, will I Challenge a Part ;
I've no Wings on my Feet—Mine are all in my Heart—
Prompt to answer alike ev'ry Customer's Wishes,
Here, in Shifting the Scene—There, in shifting the Dishes.
Methinks, tho' I hear a Voluptuary say,
Who feels more Delight in a Dish than a Play,
"In your Sentiments, Fowler, I find no enjoyment,
"I'd rather encourage your other Employment ;
"Damn your Poets and Plays !—and here !—set before me
"A Plate of your high-seasoned rich Calipee !—
"Your Shakespeare !—what point did he shew his great sense on
"That's worth our Remembrance ?—O yes—he lov'd Ven'son ;
"Of that he has left us a story behind ;
"And in that, and that only, I'm quite of his Mind."
Yet others we meet with, more polished and sage,
Who can relish the Bottle or relish the Page ;
Of Humour convivial and Judgment refined,
Feasting sometimes the Palate, and sometimes the Mind.
Against Ven'son, or Turtle, obtruding no Reason,
Yet think Shakespeare and Handel are always in Season.

'Tis mine then to study the Taste of each Guest,
 And, in either Employment to please, do my best ;
 And whether I offer a Page or a plate-full—
 I'll be ever attentive and ever be grateful.

Here was a *bonne-bouche* for the curious !—

November 15, 1784.—New and extraordinary Exhibition at the Assembly Room in the Square, Birmingham. This, and each Evening during our short stay, will be exhibited a Variety of Performances, as is at present unrivalled in any Part of Europe ; singular, pleasing, amazing and entertaining. The Exhibition of Bees surpasses belief, which nothing but ocular demonstration can convince. The Performances in Winter make it more curious. The Scientific Dog from Sadler's Wells, occasioned such Bursts of Plaudits which excelled any Exhibition of the Kind. This docile Animal answers the Description given by the famous Philosopher, Pythagoras, whose Instinct is scarce to be distinguished from the Reason of Man. Tight Rope Dancing and lofty Tumbling by two eminent Performers from the Theatre Royal, Dublin. Likewise a wonderful Mechanical Figure, large as Life, from Italy, allowed by the Connoisseurs in Mechanism to surpass anything of the Kind in Europe or elsewhere.

N.B. To enumerate Particulars would be too tedious to insert ; let it suffice, that the Proprietors pledge their Honour to the Public for the due Performance of what is here inserted.

The Doors to be opened at Six, and the Performance to begin exactly at Seven o'Clock.—Boxes Two Shillings, Pit One Shilling ; Gallery Six-pence.

The town was not only favoured by the presence of the “learned dog ;” a “pig of knowledge” was also exhibited at the same time. We learn this fact from the following lines :—

November 22, 1784.

Extempore lines on seeing the Pig of Knowledge.
 Since old Noah's days, if traditions we trace,
 Many wonders appear of the quadruped race !
 The fam'd *learned dog*, who his letters could tell,
 Was the dog of his day that was known to excel :
 Many others to please and amaze stand confest !
 But the pig for *sagacity* rivals the best.

People write about the degradation of the modern drama, and complain of sensationalism, burlesque, and other not quite “legitimate” usurpations of the stage. In the days that are no more, dancing dogs were sometimes the attraction. A troupe of these clever quadrupeds performed here in 1785.

Birmingham, Monday, February 21.—The celebrated Dancing Dogs which crowded the theatre at Sadler's-Wells, in London, so much last year, are arrived in this town, and will exhibit their astonishing performances to-night at the New Street Theatre, after the entertainments of rope and wire dancing, tumbling, and other feats of activity by the famous Little Devil and the rest of the company from Sadler's Wells.—A good band

of music is engaged. The theatre has been properly aired, and from the great expence which has been incurred, and the excellence of the performers, the exhibition, it is expected, will be of a superior kind to any similar thing which has been seen in this town.

Nor were entertainments of another kind wanted. Those days had their Maccabees, and similar monologists. Here is the announcement of one of them :—

April 18, 1785.—For Three Nights only.—On Wednesday next, April 20th, will be delivered the celebrated Satyric, Humourous, and Entertaining Dissertation upon Faces; lately brought out, and repeatedly performed at the Theatres Royal in Chester and at Liverpool, during the Oratorio Week, with universal applause. Written, and to be delivered by Mr. Cowdroy.

Part 1.—An occasional Exordium; the Face of an Alderman; the Face of a Poet; the Face of a Nabob; the two faces of a Lawyer; the two Faces of his Client, with the striking Effects of a Law-suit on his Figure and Countenance; the two Faces of a Bum Bailiff; the Face of a Country Parish Clerk; the emblematical Figure of an exotic Dancing-master; the two faces of a Music master, and the striking Effects of a Discord on his Muscles; and with a whimsical Instance of the Power of Music over the Hearts of a Group of Taylors!

In Part 1. a view of Mount Parnassus; also a whimsical Dialogue between an Alderman and a Poet. End of the First Part, the Contrast, or National Degeneracy exemplified in the Figures of a wounded British Sailor, a Frenchman, and two modern Macaronies.

Part 2. The Face of the late Hyder-Aly; the Face of a Highwayman; the two Faces of a Lottery Office keeper (before and after the Drawing) with his Motto; the Face of a Naturalist; the Face of an Astronomer; the two Faces of a modern Politician; the face of a learned Pedant, with his Speech as President of a Debating Society; the two Faces of an unlearned Pedant; the Face of a Man a week before, and three weeks after Marriage; the Married Man's Coat of Arms; the Faces of two Politicians contrasted; a Dialogue between three English Characters, a Debtor, a Porter, and an old Soldier, on the Subject of an Invasion; the two Faces of a Senator (in and out of Place) with the powerful Influence of a Pension on his Lips. The three Faces of a Tabernacle Teacher: His Street or Public Countenance; his Parlour, or Home Countenance, and his Spiritual or Conventicle Countenance; with a modern Tabernacle Harangue, in which he will give a Characteristic Lick at Air Balloons! or the Fashionable Rage of Dancing in the Clouds. The Faces, Figures, &c. entirely new, and painted by that admired Artist, Mr. G. Wilkenson, whose professional Abilities are sufficiently evinced in his Productions at the Theatre Royal, Drury-lane, London, and at the Theatre of Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, Bart.—Admittance 2s.—Tickets to be had at Pearson and Rollason's, Printers. The doors to be opened at Seven, and to begin at half-past.

Note. The Place of Performance will be timely mentioned in the Hand Bills.*

In 1786 Birmingham was honoured by the performances of *La Bella Espagnola*, and the “inimitable Little Devil.” The advertisement of their coming is followed by this paragraph :—

* This Bill is also given in Brooke's *Liverpool* from 1775 to 1800.

March 27, 1786.—The lovers of feats of activity have now an opportunity of gratifying their taste in the completest manner. The astonishing performances of the Little Devil and La Bella Espagnola, at the New-street Theatre, are beyond description. The company consists of the choicest performers from Sadler's Wells, and their various novel amusements will not, perhaps, ever be seen to such great perfection in this town.

Envy and malice will not let the good name of even a Little Devil alone. The one who visited Birmingham this year was declared not to be the real one, and a curious paragraph gives this contradiction to the rumour :—

April 3, 1786.—A malicious report having prevailed, that the Little Devil at the New-street Theatre is not the real one; he takes this opportunity of assuring the Public that he is the true and only Little Devil, and that there is no other Devil in the kingdom like him !

Here is a report of one of the many cock-fights which disgraced the period :—

April 10th, 1786.—On Friday last ended the main of cocks fought at Woore, between James Bayley, of Stapley, Esq., (John Boyer, feeder) and the Gentlemen of Cheadle, (Obadiah Keats, feeder). The main consisted of 24 battles, 13 of which were won by the former, and 11 by the latter. Boyer won 12 bye battles and Keats four.

On June the 3rd we learn that the original philosophical speaking figure, at this time the wonder and astonishment of the world, is to be seen at the Bell Inn, Dale End.

Our next extracts furnish us with a great expectation on Bell Ringing, which has long been highly popular in Birmingham, and the report of how it was realised :—

October 16th, 1786.—It is expected that next Monday's Festivity amongst the sons of Change-ringing, will, if possible, far exceed any of the former anniversaries at this place; for, exclusive both of the gentlemen of this town, and from other parts, who honour St. Martin's Society with their company, it will this year be augmented by a complete band of that ancient and respectable Society of College Youths from London, who intend being partakers of the unanimity and concord which is always known to prevail at this annual meeting. The admirers of ringing will have an opportunity of hearing the last mentioned gentlemen display their abilities on the bells at St. Martin's, which, from their well-known judgment and experience, will certainly be in a most masterly manner.

October 30th, 1786.—Monday last being the Anniversary of Saint Martin's Youths, they were honoured by a very large and respectable company, part of which consisted of the College Youths from London, who began at St. Martin's the performance of their favourite and manly exercise about ten o'clock in the morning; but after ringing in the most masterly manner for one hour and twenty minutes, the clapper of the great bell unluckily broke, and it was nearly three hours before it could be repaired, when the Society with their usual spirit recommenced their exercise, and went off for a peal of

Treble Bob, twelve in; but so great a part of the day had been spent in repairing the clapper, that after ringing upwards of four hours, the darkness of the evening obliged them to conclude, when about seven minutes more of daylight would have enabled them to have completed a peal which was universally allowed by the best judges in the art to exceed everything ever heard on these bells.

A riding academy and amphitheatre was opened in Livery Street, well known as Swann's.* Here is a brief description of the place :—

March 26, 1787.—A correspondent remarks, that amidst the many works of extraordinary skill and ability with which this seat of art abounds, the lofty and capacious Riding School, now erecting in Livery street, is not the least worthy the public attention. He means no fulsome compliment to the architect, for his name is unknown to this writer; but he ventures to assert that the whole in design, construction, and execution, cannot but do him the highest honour; for that a building of such magnitude should be supported without a single pillar of any kind, is no mean proof of judgment and capacity.—The dimensions of this extended pile of building are 112 feet long and 58 broad, and the whole is upheld by large beams of timber running parallel to each of them, and strapped together with iron.

This year was also distinguished by the appearance of a youthful prodigy called “The Musical Child,” whose performances are said to have caused much “astonishment to several numerous and polite audiences.” But a still greater treat was afforded to playgoers by the appearance of the great John Kemble for a limited engagement, during which he played Richard the Third, Othello, Hamlet, and other Shakesperian characters, but of the success of this wonderful player not a word is said, nor is there the slightest notice of his performances except in the advertisements! During his stay, however, the following notice appeared, not, it will be seen, referring to him :—

July 2nd, 1787.—In consequence of the Gallery Tickets having been forged, none will in future be issued, and nothing but Money taken at the Gallery Door.

Young Astley visited Birmingham this year, and was preceded by a series of notices which must have kept up the expectations of the public to the highest point. On October 8 we are told that the town, “in the course of a few days, will have in it one of the first horsemen in all the world, Young Astley.” This is followed on the 15th by another puff preliminary :—“When Young Astley arrives in Birmingham, he intends to complete his Riding School as soon as possible; it is said that £500 will be expended for accommodating the public to see this equestrian hero.”

* This was afterwards Livery-street Chapel, and the site is now occupied by the Printing Offices of Messrs. Billing, Son & Co.

We regret to learn that through a shameful act of wanton malice the town and the profession were near losing the Little Devil and La Bella Espagnola :—

November 5th, 1787.—The Little Devil and La Bella Espagnola, who are confessedly unrivall'd in their profession, were near making their exit in a very disagreeable way, on Friday Evening, at the Theatre in this Town. Some evil-minded person in the pit having diabolically cut the tight-rope in several places, which certainly endangered the limbs (if not the lives of the performers). It was, however, happily perceived time enough to prevent any misfortune, though it deprived the audience for that night of some part of the agreeable and wonderful performance. We hope the managers will, in future, appoint some faithful person to detect the perpetrators of such cruelly wanton acts, and spare no expence in punishing them.

The public and the faculty are at the date of writing this* invited to witness the feats of a “man with an iron jaw.” Our ancestors of 1788 had a like phenomenon to excite their wonder and astonishment. They had not only a stone lifter, but a stone-eater !—

June 9, 1788.—Shakespeare Tavern, New-street, Birmingham.—STONE EATING.—The present is allowed to be the Age of Wonders and Improvements in the Arts ! Nor does the History of Nature afford so extraordinary a Relation as that of a Man's eating and subsisting on Pebbles, Flints, Tobacco Pipes, or mineral Excrescences. But so it is ! and the Gentlemen and Ladies of Birmingham have now the opportunity of witnessing the extraordinary Fact ! by seeing one of the most extraordinary Phenomena of the Age. The wonderful STONE-EATER appears not to suffer the least Inconvenience from so ponderous and, to all other Persons in the World, so indigestible a Meal, which he repeats from Eleven till Twelve this Day at Noon, and also from Four in the Afternoon till Eight in the Evening, every Day in the Week, and positively no longer. Admittance each Time One Shilling.

N.B.—The ORIGINAL Stone Eater is obliged to be in London on the 10th of August next.

Nor was it reserved for the “wondrous nineteenth century to furnish a female Hamlet.” On Monday, August 3, 1789, was performed at the Theatre, in New Street, a “Tragedy called Hamlet, the part of Hamlet (for that night only) by Mrs. Taylor.” The lady, deeming that such a thing might somewhat surprise the play-goers of the day, enters into a defence of her conduct, and names the great precedent of Mrs. Siddons. On the same day as her advertisement was published we find this puff objurgatory :—

August 3, 1789.—However new and extraordinary it may appear for a female to undertake the character of Hamlet, it should be remembered it is not without an excellent precedent in the present state of the Stage. That admirable actress, Mrs. Siddons,

* March, 1867.

has appeared in it, both at Liverpool and Manchester, to the great delight of crowded Audiences, and with great reputation to herself. There is then no wonder that Mrs. Taylor should avail herself of such an example; nor can there be any doubt but that her well known taste and judgment will afford universal satisfaction. She adds the performance of the Child of Nature to the arduous character of Hamlet, in which she was original at Manchester, and which she repeatedly performed there to full houses with general satisfaction. The writer hereof hopes therefore that these two exhibitions united will attract such an elegant and numerous audience as Mrs. Taylor's merit, both in public and private life, may, without presumption, seem to deserve.

The "gods" of those days must have been a rude and turbulent set. We remember when very violent scenes were enacted in the upper regions of the Theatre Royal, affording an instructive contrast with the quiet and orderly conduct which now characterises the occupiers of those lofty seats. But the most uproarious acts which we have witnessed there in our youth did not prepare our minds for such shameful and disgraceful proceedings as those recorded in the following notice :—

NEW-STREET THEATRE, August 25, 1788.—A Reward will be paid by the Manager of this Theatre to any Person who will discover the Ruffians who have thrown, and hereafter shall throw Bottles, Plates, Apples, &c., at the Actors, and upon the Stage during and after the time of Performance. It is hoped every one who is Witness of such daring Insults to the Public, will lend their Assistance in bringing Offenders to Justice who commit such wanton Outrages against that Peace and Order which is necessary to be observed in all Places of Public Amusement.

The Reward will be immediately paid by Mr. Saunderson at the Theatre, to whom Information is requested to be sent.

Our next extracts introduce us to a new entertainment. The lines we have italicised reveal a curious state of society in which it was necessary to make such an announcement. What were the early performances, when, on their reproduction, by the entreaty of ladies and gentlemen, "objectionable parts" had to be omitted?

December 14, 1789.—Messrs. CAREY and KEAN having had Occasion to call at Birmingham in their Way to Ireland, have been desired by some of the most distinguished Characters in the Neighbourhood to open their EVENING LOUNGE, at Mr. Cresshull's Assembly Room. Their System consists chiefly of a great Number of Theatrical and Senatorial Imitations; the Theatrical ones, Vocal and Rhetorical, interspersed with favourite Passages of Poetical Description: some few real Characters in Life, which stand very prominent in the World, will be whimsically delineated: and Messrs. Carey and Kean hope, that at this dull and morbid Season of the Year, that their Regimen will prove a proper Exhilaration to the Human Spirits. They purpose to present their Entertainment for three Evenings only, to light the Room with wax, to have

good Fires, and to begin at Seven o'clock this present Monday, the 14th of December. Admittance Two Shillings.

December 21, 1789.—In Mr. Cresshull's Assembly Room, Messrs. Carey and Kean meant to have declined a Repetition of their EVENING LOUNGE, had they not been entreated by many Ladies and Gentlemen to present it ONCE MORE to the Public, which will be this present Monday Evening, the 21st instant; when, for that Evening, will be recited, the MATCHLESS MAID OF MORPETH, a celebrated Legendary Tale; and *all objectionable Parts of the Entertainment will be omitted.* Particulars will be mentioned in the Handbills. There will be good Fires, and will begin precisely at Seven o'Clock.

On May 18 this preliminary paragraph appeared :—"We hear that the Proprietor of the wonderful *Philosophical Fire Works* will exhibit them for four Nights, in the New-street Theatre, in this town. This much-admired novel exhibition forms one of the most surprising and splendid spectacles that can be imagined." On the 25th of May, we have this account of the strangely-named pyrotechnic display :—

The Philosophical Fire Works, to be exhibited at the New-street Theatre on Friday next, have an advantage over all other works of the kind, in being perfectly free from any disagreeable smell and not occasioning the smallest danger. The astonishing and delightful displays they afford, exceed description, and have been the wonder and admiration of every observer here and in foreign countries. The Royal Academy of Sciences in France have, in a memorial published for the King's satisfaction, spoken of them in the highest terms.

This is followed by a more detailed advertisement :—

May 25, 1789.—By Signor GENETTI.—At the New-street THEATRE, on FRIDAY next, the 29th of May instant, will be displayed, the grand Exhibition of the newly-invented Philosophical FIREWORKS, (Produced from INFLAMMABLE AIR), being the invention of the late ingenious Mr. Diller, and performed by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Adams (Pupils of the late Mr. Diller), who experienced so much of the Public's Patronage during its Exhibition at the Lyceum, London; which comprise the following Pieces :—A fixed Flower.—A Sun turning round, varying in Figure.—A Star varying.—A Triangle.—A Dragon pursuing a Serpent.—A Star of Knighthood.—A Flame proper for Light-houses, to the Splendour and Brilliancy of which the Rays of 100 Patent Lamps, collected in the same focus would be much inferior.—A central Piece, that undergoes 120 Changes of figure, and produces several Thousand Flames.—The Prince of Wales's Arms and Feathers, and an Aerostatic Branch, &c.

The Exhibition appears to have been successful, for on the first of June we read :—

High as expectation had been raised, it was more than completely answered at the exhibition of the PHILOSOPHICAL FIRE WORKS, and Concert, in the New-street Theatre, on Friday last. The beauty and vividness of the various colours of fire could not be exceeded, the variety of forms which the works assumed and represented astonished every beholder, and raised the highest ideas of the mechanical and philosophical talents of that man who invented the complex machinery which produces such delightful effects.

If at all equal to the description, the performances mentioned in the next paragraph, must have been worth seeing :—

Birmingham, Jan. 25, 1790.—The Family of the Hamiltons, who have been so long countenanced in Chester, Manchester, and Liverpool, when even the London Comedians were in that Town, have opened their Comic Extracts at Mr. Cresshull's Assembly Room, in the Square. By accounts received from a distant Correspondent, we may expect a finer Field of Theatric Amusements than have been exhibited here by any single Family. He observes, "To say nothing of the Merits of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, who have been long trained to the Manœuvres of the Stage, for they, like several itinerant Comedians, may be found striking performers, but in junction with their Daughters, their beautiful assemblage of juvenile Actresses, is scarcely to be found ; as the soft musical Pathetic of Miss Hamilton, the retentive aspiring Genius of Miss M. Hamilton, and the energetic Originality of Miss C. Hamilton engages the silent observer ; her Lingo, Captain Flash, Touchstone, Scrub, and Motley, are pure Excellences ; her diminutive Figure, justness of Speech and Action, must force the cold, the involuntary smile. It may be said of her, as is told of poetic Geniuses, that *Poeta nascitur non fit*, the Poet is not made but born ; and this infantine Performer seems evidently born for the Stage."

The Hamiltons played at Mr. Cresshull's Assembly Room in the Square, and "by permission" theatrical representations were given. During their stay they played such pieces as G. Coleman's Nature will Prevail, Scenes from Cymon, the then popular farce of Miss in Her Teens, scenes from the School for Scandal, the Waterman, the Miser and the Irish Widow. They also introduced a new piece, called the Milliners, or Female Revenge. Their performances elicited this eulogistic criticism :—

February 22, 1790.—Our Town has for these few weeks past been presented with several of the most pleasing Entertainments, both in the Vocal and Dramatic Line. In our last Paper but two, we ventured to predict the Satisfaction which the Public were likely to derive from the inimitable Efforts of the Children of Mr. Hamilton, and we are happy to find that those who have last Week visited the Assembly Room in the Square, will say they have not been disappointed, but that their expectations have been fully and completely gratified.

At the same time, also "by permission," the performances mentioned in the next advertisement were added to the amusements of the people :—

February 8, 1790.—By Permission.—At the Red Lion Great Room, in Digbeth, this and every Evening, during a short Stay in this Town, will be presented a great Variety of new and pleasing Entertainments, by Sieur Richard's Company of Performers from London. Sieur Richards will perform various Philosophical and Mathematical deceptions never before exhibited but by himself. He will likewise perform several Tricks with a Watch, viz. :—He will ask any Gentleman in the Room the Hour of the Night, when being informed, and supposing the gentleman meant to deceive him, he will, at the farther End of the Room, command the Works of his Watch out of his Pocket (leaving the Cases) when it will appear

to the Satisfaction of the Audience that his Suspicions were well founded. He mentions these Deceptions particular, but will perform above 100 others, equally surprising.

A Hornpipe, by Master Blight. Also a Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music, accompanied by the noted *Sieur Rosignolle, jun.*, who will imitate all Kinds of Birds with his Throat. To which will be added the much admired *Les Ombres Chinoises*, or the Broken Bridge. Doors to be opened at six, and begin precisely at seven o'clock.

Pit, One Shilling. Gallery, Sixpence.

The holiday and sight seekers of Whitsun-fair were this year attracted by a living fairy. Language, it seems, was too weak to describe the graces of this extraordinary creature and her companion. Tom Thumb and his wife have had their predecessors; and these were in Birmingham in 1790:—

May 24, 1790.—To be seen in Birmingham, during the Fair. However striking a curiosity may be, there is generally some difficulty in engaging the attention of the public, but even this is not the case with that graceful Couple in Miniature, *Mr. Thomas Allen* and *Lady Morgan*, the celebrated *Windsor Fairy*, who is now in the Thirty-second Year of her age, and only Eighteen Pounds weight. The curious of all degrees may resort to see them, being sensible that prodigies equal to these never made their appearance among us before, and the most penetrating have frankly declared, that neither the tongue of the most florid orator, or pen of the most ingenious writer, can describe the beauty and elegance of those phœnomena of nature, and that all description must fall infinitely short of giving that satisfaction which may be obtained on a judicious inspection.

N.B.—Ladies and Gentlemen waited on at their own houses if required.

Anecdote of their Majesties on the first introduction of *Lady Morgan*, when her benevolent Majesty recommended her to the royal protection.

When George the Third with pleasure view'd
Each native symmetry endu'd,
And no one gift unseen ;
* * *

When thus with kind complacent look,
Reply'd his far-fam'd Queen :
" Father of hearts, whose royal care
" Bids ev'ry breast thy glory share,
" Survey that polish'd mould ;
" Around that small, yet wondrous form,
" Let Poverty's afflicting storm,
" Never its rage unfold ;
" But as she owns the greatest King,
" Let her in future gladness sing,
" And feel thy bounteous sway."
He smil'd consent with placid eye,
Bid ev'ry trace of sorrow fly,
And cheer'd her cares away.

* There is evidently a line missing here, which the reader can supply as fancy dictates.

These phenomena were followed by one of a different order :—

July 26th, 1790.—A Living Ventriloquist.—The Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood may now be gratified in seeing Mr. Burns, the surprising Ventriloquist, who is just arrived from London, and may be seen at Mr. Westley's late Shop, opposite the Castle Inn, in the High-street, in this Town. He possesses the Faculty of speaking inwardly, without moving his Lips, Tongue, &c., and the Voice seems to proceed from every other Quarter of the Room than that in which he is. Mr. Burns converses and sings Songs as a Ventriloquist, and these can be by no Confederacy, that Deception which is practised by proprietors of Speaking Figures. If the Curious miss this Opportunity of seeing such a Phenomenon, another may perhaps never again present itself to them. Admittance, Ladies and Gentlemen, 1s. ; Tradesmen, 6d. ; Working People and Servants, 3d.

The next quotation affords us another Picture of the amusement of the gallery audiences at the Theatre :—

August 2nd, 1790.—New-street Theatre, Birmingham.—As many Complaints have been made to the Manager against some Person or Persons unknown, for having wantonly thrown Bottles, Stones, Peas, &c., into the Pit and on to the Stage ; This is to caution such Persons in future, not to be guilty of the like again, or they will be prosecuted with the utmost Severity ; and a Reward of One Guinea will be given, by applying to Mr. Sanderson, at the Theatre, to any Person or Persons giving Information so as to convict any Offender or Offenders guilty of the like Wantonness for the future.

The “Grand Amphitheatre” in Livery Street was sold this year, and the advertisement of the sale gives us a good description of that place of entertainment :—

August 30th, 1790.—Amphitheatre.—To be Let, or Sold by Private Contract, all that newly-erected and spacious Grand Amphitheatre, with the three Dressing Rooms and Offices, Boxes, Pit, Gallery, Circus, Stage, Orchestra, Scenery, and other Appurtenances thereto belonging, situated in Livery Street, Birmingham, which contains in Length 140 Feet, and 54 Feet in Breadth, and is capable of containing near 2000 Persons within one entire space ; the same is holden under a Lease (with other Premises) in which upwards of 56 Years are yet unexpired, and is subject to a Ground Rent of 20*l*. The Building is in every Respect firm and substantial, and there can be no Doubt of its proving an Advantageous Bargain to a Purchaser. For further Particulars, and to treat for the same, either upon Lease or Sale, apply to Mr. James Hollyoake, near Bromsgrove, or to Mr. Richard Chambers, Attorney at Law, Deritend Bridge, near Birmingham.

Letters (Post paid) will meet with proper Attention.

* * This Advertisement will not be continued.

The Unitarian meeting houses were destroyed by the riots in 1791, and for a time the congregation met in one part of the Amphitheatre. Another part was tenanted by a juvenile company of actors, or amateurs, we cannot learn which. The following curious incident is related as occurring in December, 1791, “The wall which separates

the Union Meeting from the Theatre occupied by the juvenile company, at Birmingham, does not reach to the roof, so that they can hear each other distinctly. It was somewhat curious, that about a fortnight since, both parties met accidentally to rehearse at the same time—the choir and part of the congregation, to prepare for a charity sermon, and the comedians, to rehearse the tragedy of *Douglas*; and while one of the buskin was bellowing, “Thou’rt all a lie, and false as hell,” the pious assembly, on the other side of the wall were almost rending the air with “Hallelujah, Hallelujah!”

Our next brief paragraph takes us to one of the most common and most barbarous of the amusements of our ancestors. Perhaps nothing illustrates more completely the change which has taken place, and the advancement which the people have made, that the fact that almost on the spot where this cruel sport was indulged in, stands one of our branch Free Libraries :—

September 6, 1790.—On Tuesday evening a bull that was being baited near Gosta-Green broke loose from the stake, and though he threw many people down and ran into a house in Aston-street, where there was a poor woman and child, very fortunately no serious injury was done to any one.

The Theatre advertisements contain some very curious announcements, which vividly bring before us the changes which the years have wrought in their progress. For instance, in the advertisement of January 14, 1791, announcing the Winter Amusements at the Theatre, New Street, we read, “The Theatre will be illuminated with wax.” And again :—

MR. OSBORNE respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town and Neighbourhood, that the Theatre is now warmed with Stoves, which the Proprietors have been at the Expence of erecting, whereby it is rendered as warm and comfortable as a sitting-room.

Ladies and gentlemen “are desired to send their servants early to keep the places in the boxes which have been taken,” the sovereign public of those days evidently not recognising the right of any one to have an unoccupied seat.

In this year a gentleman amateur, with all an amateur’s belief in his own powers, essayed the character of Hamlet. If the following notice is not coloured by partiality, it was a pity such an amateur should not have become a professional :—

January 31, 1791.—Most highly gratified was every lover of the drama, at our Theatre, on Wednesday night, by the respectable Gentleman who undertook the part of Hamlet ; and the crowded and fashionable audience were soon convinced that the true-bred Gentleman only could exhibit on the stage the ease, the elegance and dignity of the accomplished Prince. We shall not assume the arduous task of pointing out all the beauties of his performance ; suffice it for us to unite in the general opinion that we never saw so just an exhibition of the character of Hamlet, nor such feeling and discriminating powers in representing (without any of the usual theatrical rant) the various emotions of the agitated and unhappy heir to Denmark.

On June 6, the players of the day read this welcome announcement :
 “ On Wednesday next, our Theatre opens ; and that charming comic actress, Jordan, appears in the character of the Country Girl.” Of the performance we have this notice :—

June 13, 1791.—Mrs. Jordan, the celebrated actress, made her first appearance here on Wednesday night, in the character of the Country Girl ; till that time she was only known in this town by her extended fame, and the report of those persons who had seen her upon the London stage, which, however lavish it might have been in her praise, we may truly say has but done justice to the wonderful comic talents which she then exhibited to a most fashionable and crowded audience. The best test of her uncommon abilities is that which holds good in all professions, namely, the great income it secures to her ; the sums of money she receives from her salary and benefit at Drury-lane, and her engagements in the Country, amounting, as it is supposed, to upwards of three thousand pounds annually.

Our theatrical collection for the decade closes with a disappointment and an apology :—

Birmingham, September 12, 1791.—To the Public, As Mr. Yates has been prevented obliging his Friends with the Play of the Miser, which was desired and intended for this Evening, he thinks it his Duty to acquit himself of any seeming Want of Respect due to a Generous and Liberal Public. He was ready and willing to perform his Part, but there were not a sufficient Number of other Performers to get up the Play with that Propriety he could wish, most of them being gone either to London or Chester. Mr. Yates therefore trusts no Part of the Disappointment will be imputed to him ; and, with a grateful heart, he begs the public Acceptance of his most sincere thanks for that kind Indulgence and Liberality he has experienced this Summer, and he hopes whatever Errors may have happened during this Season will be corrected in future.

§ 5. MANNERS, CUSTOMS, ETC.

A very few extracts will furnish us with all that need be said in this section. We have scarcely any change to note in these the most permanent characteristics of humanity. The first quotation

which we make refers to a race now almost extinct, but then of great importance :—

July 1, 1782.—The Spirit of Opposition amongst the Sons of the Whip was never greater than at the present Time, the Coaches this last Week having run from London to this Town in fourteen Hours. A Correspondent begs of us to desire those Tradesmen who have lately become Adventurers in the lucrative Employment of Coach-driving to Caution their Guard (whatever Coach may be near them) against firing his Blunderbuss any more in that wanton Bravado and daring Manner which he did on Friday Morning last, in Nettlebed Lane, near Nettlebed Wood, Oxfordshire.

The following extract shows to what a fearful evil the votaries of one of the fashions of the day were subjected. The horrors of the chignon gregarines were nothing to it :—

September 8, 1783.—The following singular Circumstance a Correspondent sends us as a Fact, and desires its Insertion, as a Caution to the whole Corps of Friseurs, against their using any unction but such as has been well prepared. A gentleman sometime since, during Divine Service in one of our Churches, perceived several Maggots upon his Cloaths, and he soon discovered that they fell from his full-dressed Peruke, which however had not been worn for some weeks past. As they were not unobserved by his Neighbours he was under the disagreeable Necessity of retiring from his Devotions and quitting the Church.—Upon examination he found that the Cause of their extraordinary appearance and Production must alone be attributed to the bad Pomatum, or rather the Ointment, or some other Matter which was improperly made use of in its Stead, in the Dressing of his Wig.

Here is a model matrimonial advertisement :—

October 11, 1784.—A Good Husband Wanted.—A Country young Women, with good Health and a tolerable person, brought up in an honest and plain Way, about Twenty Years of Age, and whose Father she thinks will give her £500 down, if she marries with his Consent, offers herself for a Wife to any sober, good-tempered, well-looking young Man, between Twenty and Thirty, who is settled in a good Trade in Birmingham, or that Neighbourhood, in which she promises to give every Assistance in her Power. Direct for Miss M. E., Post-paid (for no other Letters will be received), to be left at the Printers, with real Names, and explain Particulars ; and if, from the Enquiries a Friend will privately make for her, she is so fortunate as to meet with an offer she shall like, she will soon find a Way to be introduced to the young Man, and if he then likes her, and will marry, he shall have an obedient and good Wife.

N.B.—My Father says Trade is better than the Farming Business.—Secrecy may be depended on.

Here is the record of a wonderful event :—

November 29, 1784.—Last week an honest taylor, not an hundred miles from this town, with two companions, went to a neighbouring village, where they so merrily enjoyed a few hours, that when they quitted the hospitable roof to return home the former could not discern the village church. “However,” says he, “if I cannot see the church, I plainly can the stile, which is enough for me, knowing thereby I am in the right road.” So saying he bestrode what he thought was the stile, which instantly rose up and disappeared with its rider, to the great amusement of his companions, who courageously pursued the stile to

give assistance to their friend Snip. Just as they came to the spot the taylor had been kicked off, and without staying to examine the workmanship of his wooden horse, he no sooner set his foot on terra firma than off he flew; hedges and ditches, bogs and stagnant pools in vain opposed his rapid progress, for he arrived at home in a very short time safe and sound; his countenance (like the jovial hunter's) was flushed with that agreeable glow which nought but exercise in open air can give, and as his cloaths were much torn and rent and covered with dirt, it is very evident he ought not to be called a lazy sportsman. His two companions loitered a few minutes to examine the stile, and, without spectacles, could plainly distinguish it to be a cow. As it lay across the footpath no wonder the taylor, in the dark, mistook it for a stile, considering his situation, and the great resemblance they bear to each other.

Whipping at a cart's tail was one of the common punishments of the time. Such events are, however, seldom recorded, unless some unusual circumstance attended the execution of the sentence, as in the following instance :—

April 10, 1786.—We insert the following as a caution upon any similar occasion. During the punishment of the offenders on Thursday last, who, agreeably to their sentence at the Assizes, were publicly whipped in this town, a woman who attempted to interrupt the Officers in the execution of their duty, by endeavouring to raise a riot, was immediately apprehended, and is now confined in our Dungeon for the said offence.

We give our readers one specimen of the poetic advertisements of the time :—

Birmingham, September 25, 1786.

Advertisement.

Fine Teas, China-ware, and Glass of the best,
Coffee, Chocolate, and Cocoa that will stand the Test,
Stone Blue, Poland Starch, and Rice Caroline,
New Mustard Flour, best, second, and fine,
All kinds of Spices, neat as imported,
Moist, Powder, and Lump Sugars, properly sorted;
Turkey Figs, new Currants, and Raisins o'th'Sun,
Also Malagas, Prunes, and curious French Plumb:
Blacking Balls, the best of any in Town,
W. P. for to play at, Laugh and Lie Down;
With many more Articles, I wish you to know,
May be bought of T. Farror on Terms very Low.
His Warehouse in Bull Ring is No. Thirty-eight,
And Shop to sell Retail is in Temple Street.
Auctioneering performed, we* take Leave for to mention:
To insure† your Property I beg your Attention.

Servants were a trouble in those days as they have been since, and we suppose will be to the end of time. The inserter of the following advertisement was clearly a bit of a wag :—

*In Partnership with W. Goode, No 11, New Street.
† Agent to the Phoenix Fire Office, Lombard Street, London.

September 25th, 1786.—Servant Women of all Work wanted immediately, in Birmingham. Any industrious Person of good Character, that *can cook plain Victuals, keep a House clean, and do it without being continually drove to it* (as there is no Mistress to order her) may attend to this Advertisement. There is only a little Boy and a Gentlemen in Family, and the Child goes to School. An honest, sober, pleasant tempered Woman, who answers the above Description, and is clean in her Person, will be preferred, and will be informed by the Printers of this Paper where to apply. *Wages from Five Pounds a Year to any Sum they may merit. All the heavy Linen and Shirts are washed out. None from the Register-offices need apply.*

Of all the methods of raising money for a charitable object, one of the most curious is that of begging from people on whom one had performed the awful operation of extracting a tooth. To attempt to draw money from the purse after teeth had been drawn from the head was certainly to perform the work of benevolence under difficulties. Yet such a plan was once tried in Birmingham, and was successful! As witness the record :—

December 4th, 1786.—We are glad to hear Mr. Clark, the respectable dentist, has been so much employed in his profession all last week ; since his benevolence will soon accomplish its purpose, that of saving a poor family from ruin, in consequence of a law-suit, the costs of which amount to upwards of £19, and which Mr. Clark has generously undertaken to collect from the liberality of those who apply to him to have their teeth drawn.

Notice to correspondents are very few in the old papers. Here are two which appear in one day :—

December 11th, 1786.—The quantity of poetry which we have received this week, upon the death of friends, &c., we must decline inserting ; and as the publications of such articles is incompatible with the plan of this paper, we hope our friends will not in future load us with the unnecessary expence of postage on such subjects.

Philanthropist cannot suppose we can insert such a charge as his from an anonymous correspondent.

A disgraceful practice of the redoubtable members of the old P.R. is exposed in the following extract. We believe the custom here protested against has not entirely disappeared from that very honourable fraternity :—

May 14th, 1787.—As sham fights have been so frequent of late, which entice a number of useful hands from the different manufactures, to the great injury of the town, we are induced to insert an account of a battle which happened about a fortnight ago, and came on to be heard at the Court of Requests on Friday last, in which a plaintiff sued for 1*l.* 19*s.* 11*d.*, being part of 50*s.* lost at a battle. The debt being denied, the Court enquired into the nature of the claim, when it appeared as follows :—The defendant, who was himself an adept in fighting, had procured two disciples of the fist to fight a sham battle, that profit might be drawn from the unwary. But as disgrace always

attends the vanquished, a dispute arose between the combatants which should be winner. One of them being much the tallest could not consent to be beaten, and the pride of the lesser could not submit without an additional guinea. A Sidesman was enlisted for each, who was to share the booty ; about ten guineas were won by those in the secret from those out. All the parties were present. The Court remonstrated against so rascally a practice, and expressed their regret that none of the parties had been beaten enough ; that they degraded the character of men, and were destructive to the harmony of Society. The money fraudulently won ought to be returned ; and the plaintiff was as much entitled to the whole sum as to that for which he sued ; that if the defendant would promise to pay the other ten shillings, they would make an order for the sum demanded in as easy payments as he should desire ; but if he refuse, they would make an immediate order for the whole, and instantly commit him to prison until it was paid. The defendant willingly acquiesced in the proposal, promising never again to be concerned in so vile a practice ; and observed with sorrow, that “his case was hard, for he was obliged to give a guinea of his winnings to one of the Sidesmen, a noted bruiser then in court.” The Commissioners replied, they should not be satisfied with lopping off the branches of an evil, but endeavour to pluck it up by the roots ; that if he choose to bring the Sidesman, the Court would not only assist him in recovering his guinea, but any other person who had been taken in by the *knowing ones*.

On March 23, 1789, a Peter Rabalio, of 18, Edgbaston Street, weather-glass maker, advertises a lottery for the disposal of his goods. There are to be 104 tickets at Half-a-Guinea each. We are told, with a coolness which shows the advertiser's great faith in the credulity of the people, that “The Clock alone is worth considerably more than the Price of the Tickets.” He adds as an excuse for, or a justification of his proceedings, these words in small caps :—“Necessitas et Honestas compellunt me.” Peter Rabalio was not an Englishman.

Our next records a shameful hoax practiced on one John Dudley :—

March 9, 1789.—TWENTY GUINEAS REWARD.—WHEREAS JOHN DUDLEY, living with Messrs. Heaton and Duperoy, Birmingham, received on Friday last, a Letter bearing the Oxford Post-mark, containing the following Lines :—“Our dear Mother now lays dangerously ill. I need say no more to bring you and Samuel here immediately ; my Heart is nearly broke ; God bless you both. Adieu. Signed, A. DUDLEY. February 23, 1789.—Which Lines caused the said John Dudley and his brother to ride post upwards of sixty Miles :—A Reward of Twenty Guineas will be given to any Person who shall discover the writer thereof to be paid on Conviction. Apply to Mr. Dudley, Windlebury, near Bicester, Oxon ; or to John Dudley, at Messrs. Heaton and Duperoy's, Birmingham.

Wife selling was rather a common habit in those days. The reports of the sale of these wretched women were rarely given ; but this admonitory paragraph shows that the practice was of frequent occurrence :—

March 1, 1790.—As instances of the sale of wives have of late frequently occurred among the lower class of people, who consider such sales lawful, we think it right to inform them that, by a determination of the courts of law in a former reign, they were declared illegal and void, and considered (a light in which religion must view them) as mere pretences to sanction the crime of adultery.

Slow as true and genuine improvement is amongst the people, we certainly have made some well-ascertained progress in morals and social habits, since such an incident as that related above was a rather common event. We have not entirely freed ourselves even from this stain on the social life of the people, and wife beating is now of daily occurrence, and is, of the two, perhaps, a worse crime than that of wife selling.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The first Sunday School in England was founded by Mr. Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, in the year 1781. In a remarkable letter, which will be quoted shortly, he narrates to a correspondent the cause which led him to undertake this philanthropic labour. The good seed thus quietly sown soon yielded a rich harvest, and Sunday Schools were established year after year, not only in our large towns, but in the Agricultural Districts. Birmingham was, we rejoice to say, very early in following the example. There is, at least, reason to doubt whether the first Sunday School at Gloucester was opened in the end of 1781 or the beginning of 1782. However this may be, it is quite certain that a meeting was held in this town, early in 1784, to consider the advisability of raising subscriptions, and forming a society for the purpose of founding and supporting Sunday Schools. The clergymen of the Church of England were very active in this work in Birmingham, and to the Revs. C. Curtis and J. Riland belongs the honour of having taken the initiative in this matter. The first meeting was held on the 7th of July, 1784, and on the Sunday next to Michaelmas Day in the same year twelve schools for boys, and twelve for girls were opened in different districts of the town. With the characteristic energy of the inhabitants, in less than three months after the subject had been introduced, schools capable of accommodating at least seven hundred and twenty children of both sexes, together with

the necessary teachers, had been provided. We now proceed to give the history of this important undertaking :—

July 5, 1784.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The Utility of these Seminaries for the Instruction of the lower Class of People, and for a due Observance of the Sabbath, being proved in different Parts of England :—A Well-Wisher to such a laudable Institution requests the Inhabitants of Birmingham to meet on that Business at the Hotel, on Wednesday Morning, the 7th inst., at Ten o'Clock precisely.

This meeting was held, but neither the name of the Chairman nor of the gentlemen who called the meeting are given. It was, however, resolved that such an Institution be set on foot, and that an annual subscription be immediately opened for that purpose. The sum of £32 was subscribed at the meeting, and a number of Rules were adopted to be laid before a general meeting, to be held on the 27th, and subject to such alterations as might then be determined on.

Rules and Orders for Sunday Schools.

I.—That the Management and Direction of these Seminaries be vested in a Committee, chosen from the Subscribers at large.

II.—That the Town be divided into Twelve Parts ; and that Two Schools (the one for Males and the other for Females) be formed in each Part.

III.—That Two Subscribers, by Rotation, visit the Schools in each District ; and that they make their Report, written down in a Book provided for that Purpose.

IV.—That the Committee meet every First Monday in the Month, at ————, for the Purpose of auditing the Accounts, giving Orders about the Teachers, and reforming Abuses.

V.—That the Committee order and regulate the particular Hours for the Scholars attending on the Sabbath Day.

VI.—That no Children be admitted who are under Six Years of Age ; and that none be excluded because of riper Age, but rather have the preference to those that are younger.

VII.—That all Persons employed in the Manufactories shall have the Preference as to Admission.

VIII.—That nothing whatever be taught in the Schools but what is suited immediately to the Design of the Sabbath Day, and preserving young Persons from Idleness, Immorality, and Ignorance.

IX.—That the Committee provide proper Books for the Use of the Scholars ; and that they grant such Rewards to the Diligent and Orderly as to them may seem useful and of general Advantage.

X.—That the Scholars in each District, with their respective Teachers, go to Church or Chapel both Morning and Afternoon.

XI.—That the Committee have a Power to fix a Salary for the different Teachers.

XII.—That the Names of the Scholars be called over each Time of their being in the School, in the particular parts of the Day; the Absentees be enquired after, returned, or excluded.

XIII.—That the Scholars be catechised in the School or the Church, some one Part of the Day, by a Clergyman, or some other appointed by him; the Schools being always open to the Clergy of the Town.

XIV.—That all the Subscribers, in the respective Districts, who visit the Schools, and also all the Church and Chapel Wardens, with their respective Sidesmen, be requested to pay what Attention they can to the Streets and Environs of the Town, in Order to prevent People idling about, and playing on the Lord's Day.

XV.—That a Copy of the Rules, so far as they relate to the Teachers and Scholars, be hung up in each School, and read aloud every Month.

Resolved,—That such Persons who are inclined to subscribe to this Charity, be requested to give in their Names to any of the above gentlemen who attended the Meeting.

It is but an act of gratitude which we owe the benevolent men who began this good work, to reproduce the names of those who attended the first meeting and gave the first subscriptions. They were the Revs. Charles Curtis, John Riland, Thomas Price, John Clutton, Charles Lewis Shipley, and John Turner; Messrs. W. Bedford, W. Villers, T. Simcox, S. Hammond, E. Johnstone, M.D., G. Simcox, T. Price, R. Lloyd, G. Wright, W. Smith, T. Cooper, T. Green, T. Bellamy, C. Norton, J. Allison, I. Westley, T. Lutwyche, W. Holden, and T. Hood.

With the report of this meeting is printed a letter from the *Leeds Intelligencer* on the subject of Sunday Schools in that town. It is as follows:—

To the Printers.—Gentlemen,—As several Enquiries have been made by different Townships into the State of the Sunday Schools at Leeds, with a view to establish something similar in different parts of this Kingdom, I beg leave to inform the Public, through the Channel of your Paper, in what manner this Institution was begun here and in what State it now is.

The Town is divided into eight Parts for the purpose of collecting the Assessments, &c. A Paper was written upon the sad Consequences which flowed from the Liberty which all sorts of young People have in this Kingdom of abusing the Sabbath-Day, and upon the Advantages which might arise from Sunday Schools. This Paper was carried about in one of the Divisions by two Shopkeepers, and Subscriptions solicited of all who wished to encourage the Attempt. The richer Inhabitants freely subscribed. Masters and Schools were then sought for, and Notice given to the poorer Inhabitants, and the Sunday following, about two Hundred Children were assembled belonging to the Division.—The next week the same Steps were pursued in a second Division, and the same success attended them; and so on till Schools were established for all the Town. As circumstances require variations take place. At present there are Twenty-eight Schools, Forty-nine masters, and about Two Thousand Scholars. The Subscriptions pay everything, and the Purse is a Common one, only there is in each Division a Treasurer,

who receives and pays all in it, and who, if he have too much for his requirements, assists others who have less. Schools, Rooms, and Masters are hired according to the Value or Merits of each. Wood is purchased in Battins, for Seats, Writing Desks, &c. A Joiner employed at so much per day to make them. Books are also provided by the Subscriptions and Benefactions, excepting only some Presents from private Persons. The Schools begin at One o'clock. At Half-past the names are called over. Each master has a list of his own Scholars. The Scholars read, or if they can read well, they learn to write, till three o'clock. The Masters then lead part of the School, in order to the three Churches, and return with them in the same manner. The Rest go down at Six o'clock to Evening Prayers in turn.—Some of the Children say the Catechism at Church.—They next go one at a time or two to get a little refreshment, and return immediately. At half-past five the names are called over again, and those who are absent marked again. Towards Evening the Masters sometimes read a little in the Bible or other Book to them. Then sing part of a Psalm, and conclude with a form of Prayer, composed and printed for the Purpose. As they read or write, the Masters endeavour to show them the wickedness of Sabbath-breaking, Lying, Cheating, Gambling, &c., and to inform them of the duties of Religion and Morality. Five of the Clergy visit the Schools at their pleasure, and say whatever they please to encourage and improve the Children. The Treasurers do the same. Others may call in the same way, and speak if they choose to encourage the Children. Three or four Persons are employed for the sole purpose of enquiring at the Schools who are absent. These men take the names of the absent down, and go to seek for them. They enquire of the Parents into the reasons of their Absence, and if they are playing truant seek for them and bring them into the Schools. And if they find any boys or children in the Streets who seem to be fit Objects, they are to prevail with them, if possible, to go to the next School, and if they cannot avail, to go to their parents to enquire why they are not sent. The parents in general send them carefully, and are very thankful for the Institution, and the whole Town in general seems to be much satisfied with it. We hope, with the Blessing of Heaven, that much good will be done; we flatter ourselves that some has been done already. But it should be observed that this must depend greatly under God upon the seriousness and unwearied attention of the Persons who inspect, and the Persons who conduct the business. Much indeed upon the Steadiness and Principles of the Masters.

Leeds, June 10.

CLERICUS.

On July 10, a letter from Mr. R. Raikes was printed on the same subject. In this short document he gives the origin and history of the movement in Gloucester, where he first established Sunday Schools. Both this letter and that already quoted by Clericus afford us such a graphic picture of the way this good work was begun, and the means employed in bringing it to a success, that they will be read at the present time with interest. Some of the things then done might be imitated with advantage even now. Mr. Raikes's Letter is thus introduced, "Mr. Raikes of Gloucester, to whom the inhabitants of this City and many other places are indebted for the Institution of Sunday Schools,

for the instruction of the poorest class of our fellow creatures, gives the following account of its rise and happy success in Gloucester, in a letter to a gentleman in a neighbouring county—which we have pleasure in presenting to the public” :—

Gloucester, June 5th, 1784.—Dear Sir,—I have not the leisure to give you an entire account of my little plan for attempting a reform of the rising generation of the lower class of people, by establishing Schools where poor children may be received upon the Sunday, and there engaged in learning to read and repeat their catechism, or anything else that may be deemed proper to open their minds to a knowledge of their duty to God, their neighbours, and themselves.

The utility of an establishment of this sort was first suggested to my mind by a group of little miserable wretches whom I observed one day in the street, where many people employed in the pin-manufactory reside. I was expressing my concern to an inhabitant at this forlorn neglected state;—and was told, that if I were to pass through the street upon Sunday, it would shock me indeed to see the crowds of children who were spending that sacred day in noise and riot, and cursing and swearing; to the extreme annoyance of all sober decent people who resided there, or had occasion to pass that way.

I immediately determined to make some little effort by way of a trial, to prove whether it were possible to remedy the evil. Having found four persons of respectable character who had been accustomed to instruct children in reading, I engaged to pay the sum they required for receiving and instructing such children as I should send to them every Sunday. The children were to come soon after ten in the morning and stay till twelve; they were then to go home to dinner, and return at one; and after reading a lesson they were to be conducted to church. After church they were to be employed in repeating the catechism till half after five, and then to be dismissed, with an injunction to retire home without making a noise; and by no means to play in the streets. This was the general outline of the regulation. With regard to the parents, I went round to remonstrate with them on the melancholy consequences that must ensue from so fatal a neglect of their children's morals. They alleged that their poverty rendered them incapable of cleaning and clothing their children fit to appear either at school or at church; but this objection was obviated by a remark that if they were clad in a garb fit to appear in the streets, I should not think it improper for a school calculated to admit the poorest and most neglected; all that I required were clean faces, clean hands, and the hair combed. In other respects they were to come as their circumstances would admit.

In a little time the people perceived the advantage that was likely to arise. Many Children began to show talents for learning, and a desire to be taught. Little rewards* were distributed among the most diligent: this excited emulation. One or two worthy Clergymen kindly lent their countenance and assistance, by going round to the schools on the Sunday afternoon, to hear the children their catechism. This was of great consequence.

Another clergyman hears them their catechism once a quarter publicly in the church, and rewards their good behaviour with some little gratuity.

* They are books, combs, shoes, or some article of apparel.

They are frequently admonished to refrain from swearing: and certain boys who are distinguished by their decent behaviour are appointed to superintend the conduct of the rest, and make report of those that swear, call names, or interrupt the comfort of the other boys in their neighbourhood. When quarrels have arisen, the aggressor is compelled to ask pardon, and the offended is enjoined to forgive. The happiness that must arise to all from a kind, good-natured behaviour, is often inculcated.

This mode of treatment has produced a wonderful change in the manners of these little savages. I cannot give a more striking instance than I received the other day from Mr. Church, a considerable manufacturer of hemp and flax, who employs great numbers of these children. I asked him whether he perceived any alteration in the poor children he employed since they had been restrained from their former prostitution of the Lord's Day; and instead of spending it in idleness and mischief, had been taught to devote it to the improvement of their mind, and learning that which might hereafter assist in opening their understandings to a sense of their duty. "Sir," says he, "the change could not have been more extraordinary in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men. In temper, disposition, and manners, they could hardly be said to differ from the brute creation; but since the establishment of the Sunday Schools they have seemed desirous to show that they are not the illiterate creatures they were before. When they see a person whom they have looked up to as superior, come and kindly instruct and admonish them, and sometimes reward them for good behaviour, it has inspired with emulation to amend many who were deemed incapable of any such sensations. They are anxious to gain his friendship and good opinion; they have now one whom they wish to please; and as they know this is to be effected only by decent and orderly conduct, they are striving who shall excel. In short, I never conceived that a reformation so singular could have been effected among the set of untutored beings I employed. They are also become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful."

From this little sketch of the reformation which has taken place among the poor children of this city, there is great reason to hope that a general establishment of Sunday School, supported by the attention of a few active individuals, would in time make some change in the morals of the lower class; at least it might in some measure prevent them from growing worse, which at present seems but too apparent.

I fear I have trespassed too far upon your patience in this recital, but I could not well compromise in narrower limits the information you required. I am, dear Sir, your obedient humble servant,

R. RAIKES.

N.B. The parish of St. Nicholas has lately established two schools, and some gentlemen of this city have also set up others. To some of the school-mistresses I give 2s. a week extra to teach children when they come from work during the week days.

A meeting was held on the 27th of July, and the rules were adopted. Another meeting was held on August 6, at which it was

Resolved,—That a Committee of Twelve Subscribers of a Guinea each be immediately chosen, and that the Management and Direction of the Schools be vested in a Meeting of any five or more of them at any one Time. In consequence of which Resolution twelve Gentlemen were appointed by Ballot.

Resolved,—That the Clergy, Church and Chapel-wardens, with their respective Sidesmen, the Overseers, Bailiffs, and all the Officers of the Town be members of, and have at all Times free access to, the Committee.

The Rev. C. Curtis was elected chairman, and on the 16th of August notice was given that “those School-masters and Mistresses, who mean to offer themselves as Teachers, are desired to send in their Names with their Recommendations, in Writing, sealed up, to be delivered to the Committee, at the Public Office on the 17th.” The work was evidently carried on with zeal and earnestness, for on September 5, the following advertisement was published :—

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The Committee give notice, That TWELVE SCHOOLS for BOYS, and TWELVE for GIRLS, to contain at least THIRTY each, will be opened the Sunday after Michaelmas-Day next, in different parts of the Town, when the Subscribers are requested to recommend the Children by Letter, directed to the Committee.—A Subscriber of Two Guineas to recommend four Children ; a Guinea Subscriber, two ; and a Half-Guinea Subscriber one, for the present.

C. CURTIS, Chairman.

N.B. School Masters and Mistresses, well recommended, will meet with Encouragement, by applying to the Committee at the Public Office, on Tuesday morning, the 21st instant, at Ten o'clock precisely.

The first difficulty appears to have been the ordinary one on such occasions. People gave their money but would not take the trouble to recommend children. Thus on November 8, the following notice was advertised :—

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Birmingham, November 2, 1784.—As many of the Subscribers to the Institution have not yet recommended Children to these Schools ; the Committee take this method of informing them, that they meet every Tuesday Evening at Six o'Clock, during this month, at the Public-Office in Dale End : And they particularly Request the Subscribers to send, on those Evenings, the names of such Objects as they think proper to be admitted, mentioning at the same Time their Ages, the Names of their Parents, and Places of Abode.

C. CURTIS, Chairman.

This apathy on the part of the Subscribers in responding to the desire of the Committee is referred to in the next notice, and in the same advertisement we have the gratifying intelligence that “hitherto the Schools have answered the expectations” of the Committee.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Public Office, Dale End, January 4, 1785.—Notice is hereby given to all the Subscribers to the Sunday Schools in this Town, that they are requested to meet the Committee, at this Office, on Tuesday Afternoon, the 11th Day of the Month, at Three o'Clock precisely, on particular Business relative to the filling the present Schools and the establishing new ones.

N.B.—As a considerable Delay to the completing of this Business, in a Degree equal to the Subscriptions for it, has been occasioned by many of the Subscribers not sending their Recommendations of Children (though repeatedly requested by the Committee) so soon as the Masters and Mistresses were ready to receive them. It is therefore the Intent of the Committee, at this Meeting, to propose the Question.—Whether they shall then proceed to complete the Number of Scholars in each School, also to begin additional ones from the Number of Children who are now ready, and have been some Time, to be sent to them? Or whether each Subscriber shall be desired by the Committee to recommend an additional Number of Children to what they have already recommended, provided they send their Recommendations within a limited Time given them? We have the Pleasure to inform the generous Public that hitherto the Schools have answered our Expectations. And as such a useful Institution merits further Encouragement, and the Public will undoubtedly see its Advantage, the Committee cannot refrain from expressing their earnest Wishes for an Increase to it by fresh Subscriptions; and especially from the Gentry of our Neighbourhood, in Parishes where they have not, as we conclude they need not, Institutions of this nature.

J. RILAND, Chairman.

The success which attended this benevolent undertaking in Birmingham will be seen by the following statement of the first year's working :—

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

October 10, 1785.—One year being expired since the Establishment of this laudable Institution, the Committee think it incumbent on them to lay before the Public the true state of the different Schools; and also the Moneys received and expended for supporting the same :—

Number of Scholars admitted since Michaelmas last	...	...	...	1400
Number uninstructed prior to Admission	...	..	...	500
Number that read in Children's First Book	...	...	...	1400
Number that read Prayer-Book, Testament, and Bible	...	...	...	800
Number that repeat Lewis's Catechism	...	...	...	156
Number that repeat Dr. Watts' Hymns	...	...	...	334
Number that have been catechised in the Churches and Chapel	...	...	...	576

The Committee are happy to find a great Reformation of Manners among the Scholars in general.

Debtor.				Creditor.			
£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
429	6	0		Salaries of different Masters and Mistresses	248	11	0
				Books	55	17	7
				Stationery	20	19	8
				Secretary	10	0	0
				Extra Trouble	3	8	0
				Sundries	3	3	0
				Public Office	1	0	2
					342	19	5
				Balance in the Hands of the Treasurer, to be applied to the opening of additional Schools	86	6	7
					429	6	0

By the above Account the generous Supporters of this Institution will, we flatter ourselves, be thoroughly convinced that their Liberality has not been misapplied, and that it has not been in vain. The Facts, therefore, contained in this Report, have all the Force of the strongest Reasoning, and of the most prevailing Solicitation.

N.B. As many Children have been admitted into the Schools, who are not of this Parish, it was resolved, at the General Meeting of Subscribers, that future Subscriptions be not only solicited in the Town, but in its Environs, particularly the Parishes of Aston and Handsworth. C. CURTIS, Chairman.

It will have been noticed, in curious contrast with our present system, that, in the early history of Sunday Schools, all the masters and mistresses were paid.

It was the practice to take all the school children to Church on Sundays. The Dissenters soon began to complain of this, and made an application to the committee for "their children to have the privilege of going to their own place of worship." This request could not be granted without an alteration of rules 6 and 7, already quoted. A general meeting of the Subscribers was therefore called for the 10th of March, 1786, to consider and decide upon the application. A post-script was added to the advertisement calling the meeting as follows :—

"As the Business is of no small Importance, it is hoped that every Well-wisher to the Institution will make a Point of attending."

We rejoice to say that, at this meeting, the rules were altered, but we regret to say, that in consequence of the complaints of subscribers, the resolution authorising this change was rescinded in September of the same year. A general meeting was held on the 26th, with the Rev. C. Curtis in the chair, when the following resolutions were passed.

Resolved,—That the report of the state of the Schools, with the Account of the moneys received and expended for their support, be laid before the Public.

It being represented to this Meeting, that several Gentlemen have threatened to withdraw their Subscriptions to the Sunday Schools, in Consequence of an alteration of the General Rules, made at the Request of the Dissenters on Friday, the 10th of March, 1786.

Resolved,—That the Resolutions granting that Request (which the Dissenters themselves had not availed themselves of, and attended to as they engaged) be rescinded, and that in future the rules as they originally stood be strictly adhered to.

Resolved,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to those Gentlemen who have visited the Schools.

At the same meeting at which this retrograde step was taken, the following report of the state of the schools and of the progress made in the two years was presented :—

The second Year being expired since the establishment of this laudable Institution, the Committee appointed by the Subscribers think it will be expected by the Public, that the present State of the Schools be laid before them, and also an Account of what Moneys have been received and expended in their Support : they therefore respectfully inform the Town at Large, and all the Subscribers and Friends of the Institution in particular, that the Number of the Schools is 59, and the number of the Children now belonging to them near 2000 ; that the same Books are used, and the like method of Instruction continued to be taken with the Children which were at first, and are proposed to be taken for Time to come ; and though the Committee feel Pain in confessing that they have been obliged to expel some of the Children on Account of their Neglect in attending the Schools, yet they find Pleasure in reporting that good have been the consequences in general, evident in the Learning and Behaviour of the rest, who have paid regular Attendance at their Schools.

The Report of the Moneys received and expended, according to the Treasurer's Account, is stated as follows :—

DR.			CR.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Balance as per statement to Michaelmas, 1785	86	6 7	Salary of Masters and Mistresses	389	4 6
Sundry Benefactions and Subscriptions to Michaelmas, 1786			Books	30	2 9
	434	6 0	Stationery	8	14 8
			Secretary	8	8 0
	£520	12 7	Sundries	0	4 5
			Use of Public Office, etc. . .	1	15 4
			Balance in hands of the Treasurer, Sep. 29, 1786 . .	82	2 11
				£520	12 7

By the above Report and State of the Accounts, the Committee trust that the Subscribers and Friends to these Schools will be convinced that their Moneys (generously contributed by them) have been laid out properly to answer their good purposes, and they hope also that the conviction will prove a means to engage them to continue their Subscriptions, and induce others to become fresh Subscribers.

JOSEPH DOLEY, Secretary.

The next Annual Meeting was held on October 2, 1787, of which we have the following report :—

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Public Office, October 2nd, 1787.—At a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Sunday Schools in this town, held this day, the Rev. Mr. Curtis having informed the

Meeting that the Magistrates (Dr. Spencer and Mr. Carles) intend presenting the Institution with the profits of a Play, generously given by Mr. Yates for charitable Purposes.

Resolved,—That the thanks of the Meeting be given to the said Magistrates.

Resolved,—That the following Report be laid before the Public :—Report of the State of the Sunday Schools in Birmingham, for 1787. The very generous Support which this excellent Institution has received must give the greatest pleasure to all who have had the Success of it at Heart, and the Committee cannot but congratulate those who have been zealous in supporting the Christian Cause by their liberal Subscriptions, that they have been the means of instructing at least 18,000 Children, who were before deficient in Religious Knowledge ; that the Children have obtained this Instruction on the Day on which they would have contracted many vicious habits ; that they have been accustomed regularly to attend the public Worship of their God at Church or Chapel, and that they have been Catechised by the Clergy of the Town. These great and urgent Motives must speak for themselves, and we trust that the Prospect of continuing to instil gradually into the minds of youth the best Principles, and not only rendering the most essential Service as Members of Society by the Improvement of their Understandings, but guarding them against the delusions of this world, and qualifying them for the glories of another, will be sufficient to induce the Public to patronise so laudable an Undertaking, by not only Subscribing, but also furnishing the Committee with proper Objects for Admission into the Schools. This the Committee earnestly request the Subscribers to attend to ; and also enjoin the Objects they recommend to be very punctual in coming to School on the Sunday Morning and Afternoon, at the hours (8 A.M. and 2 P.M.) appointed. The good Behaviour of those who observe this necessary Rule, and their Proficiency in Learning, are ample proofs of the Benefit already derived, and give reasonable grounds for the expectation of greater benefits that may be drawn from the Institution, if this request of the Committee is complied with.

An Account of the Moneys received and expended :

DR.			CR.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Balance as per	82	21 1	Teachers' Salaries	424	17 0
Statement to			Books	8	4 0
Michelmas,			Stationery	19	12 4
1786. . . . }			Secretary	8	8 0
Sundry Benefac-	411	3 6	Sundries	2	10 0
tions and Sub-			Use of the Public Office . . .	1	3 11
scriptions to			Balance in the Hands of the		
Michaelmas,			Treasurer	28	11 2
1787. . . . }					
	£493	6 5		£493	6 5

By the above Report and Statement of Accounts, the Committee trusts that the Subscribers and Friends to the Schools will find that their generous Contributions have been applied with Prudence agreeable to their good intentions, and as the same prudent Application will be made of future Benefactions, and the same, if not greater, Advantages

will in all Probability be derived from the Schools, it is hoped that the present Subscribers to this Charity will continue to it their Countenance and encouragement, and others also be induced to follow their laudable example.

Resolved,—That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

C. CURTIS, Chairman.

Partly in consequence of rescinding the resolution which allowed the Sunday School Children to attend their own places of worship, and partly from their desire to give a larger secular education, the Unitarians established in 1787 a Sunday School in connection with, but independent of, their own chapel. No sectarian doctrines were taught; and for the quality of the instruction given, this school soon became, and continues to be, one of the most successful in the town. It is probable that the establishment of this school is one of the difficulties mentioned in the next report of the Sunday Schools Committee. On the completion of the fifth year since their foundation, the following report was laid before the public :—

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Birmingham, 2nd October, 1789.—The fifth Year being now completed since the commencement of this very laudable and useful Institution, the Committee think it their Duty to lay before the Public a Report of the present State of the Schools in this Town. They have much Pleasure in observing that the important Ends originally proposed by this Institution are, in a very extensive Degree, answered on the Scholars in general; and, considering the Impediments which have arisen from the Negligence of many of their Parents, the Attendance has been as full and regular as could well have been expected. Discouragements will arise in the Prosecution of every Design for the Public good; but they earnestly hope, that through the unremitting Attention of the respective Visitors, aided by the liberal Support and Influence of the Subscribers, those Difficulties which have hitherto impeded the more general Utility of Sunday Schools in Birmingham will gradually be removed. The Committee are happy in expressing their Gratitude to the Subscribers at large for the very generous Support this Institution has already received from their Bounty, and they trust the Experience of its growing Utility to the Poor of the rising Generation will operate as a sufficient Motive for the Continuance of the Bounty in future.

The Committee would be wanting in Duty did they not express the high Sense they entertain of the Diligence and Attention of the Visitors, by whose Exertions the Interests of this Charity have been so essentially promoted. It is earnestly requested by the Committee, that the Subscribers at large would exert themselves in enquiring after such Objects as they shall deem proper for Admission; and that they would, at the same Time, direct their Parents to accompany them to the Public Office, where the Committee meet regularly once a Fortnight, on the Tuesday Evening, for that Purpose.

The State of the Finances will enable the Committee to extend the Rewards of Diligence this Year, by the Gift of Bibles and other Books which may be considered proper for the Improvement of the Children. The Rev. Mr. E. BURNE, Chairman.

The Committee of Sunday Schools in account with ROBERT COALES.

DR.			CR.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
1789.			1788. Sept. 27.		
To Teachers' Salaries.....	361	11 3	By Balance.....	69	6 5½
„ Books.....	5	12 5	„ Subscriptions.....	432	6 4½
„ Stationery.....	8	8 10			
„ Secretary.....	8	8 0			
„ Sundries.....	0	11 10			
„ Public Office.....	2	0 0			
„ Balance in hand.....	115	0 6			
	<u>£501</u>	<u>12 10</u>		<u>£501</u>	<u>12 10</u>
			1789, Sept. 30.		
			By Balance in hand.....	115	0 6

J. DOLEY, Secretary.

Thus, step by step, the good work progressed. The 1,800 children taught in Sunday schools in 1788 have increased to 26,600 in 1867, for whose reception there are 62 schools, and a staff of zealous, voluntary, and unpaid teachers, exceeding 2,500 in number, who give up Sunday after Sunday to rescue the children of the poor from the slough of ignorance and sin. “Verily, they have their reward.”

REVOLUTION COMMEMORATION.

The “Glorious Revolution of 1688” was an event of which Englishmen may well be proud. It was the final overthrow of the Stuarts and their Bourbon rule in this country, and the commencement of a new era in the history of English liberty. It is true that the seed then sown was a long time growing, and still longer in bearing fruit. We had to pass through the long and sterile reigns of the four Georges, during which politics were, for the most part, a mere battle between Whig and Tory, for place, power, and pence. During the reign of the Third of that name, Orangeism was in especial favour, and, by the almost coincidence of date, the glorious Revolution and the deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot were celebrated together. The loyalists of Birmingham were not behind the rest of the nation, and on October 27, 1788, this advertisement was published :—

REVOLUTION COMMEMORATION.

As many of the principal Inhabitants of Birmingham, have determined to commemorate the Glorious Revolution of 1688, by DINING together on the FOURTH of

NOVEMBER, this Notice is given, that the Company of any Friend to our happy Constitution would be acceptable: and it is desired that such Gentlemen of this Town and Neighbourhood, who intend to favour the Celebration by their Attendance, would please to send their names to the Bar of the Hotel as soon as possible. Dinner will be on the Table at 3 o'Clock.

STEWARDS	{	H. CLAY, Esq., High-Bailiff.
		MR. S. COLMORE, Low-Bailiff.
		EDWARD CARVER, Esq.
		WILLIAM KETTLE, Esq.

On the 3rd of November a short paragraph was published giving the following information on the forthcoming commemoration :—

We learn from various parts of the kingdom, that great preparations are making to celebrate the 4th and 5th inst. with uncommon festivity. At York, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Derby, Hull, Sheffield, and Norwich, the inhabitants have, by public advertisements, declared their intention of commemorating these auspicious days. Our dinner upon this occasion, on Tuesday, we perceive from the names already given in, will be most numerous and respectably attended. The BALL will be at the Hotel on Wednesday evening, and the gentlemen who chuse to attend it are particularly desired to leave their names at the Bar of the Hotel before twelve o'Clock on the preceding day. We are happy to declare that in consequence of the objections which almost universally prevail against illuminations, the Committee of the Centennial Meeting in this place, to-morrow, have determined *not to illuminate the Hotel where they are to assemble*; and we hope there are none who had intended to light up their windows, but who are such friends to unanimity as to desist from their resolution.

The authorities also issued the following notice :—

November 3, 1788.—REVOLUTION JUBILEE AND GUNPOWDER PLOT.—The Officers of the Town respectfully inform the Public that no Illuminations, Bonfires, or Fireworks, will take place on the Celebration of the above Days, on Tuesday and Wednesday next, and hereby give Notice that proper People will be stationed in different Parts of the Town to apprehend all Persons letting off Serpents, Rockets, &c. ; and such as are found offending will be prosecuted to the utmost Rigour of the Law.

The report of this commemoration is the fullest we have yet met with of any local event, except that of the Debate on the Theatre Bill. This is the record of how Birmingham celebrated the anniversary of the glorious Revolution of 1688, one hundred years after it occurred, and almost eighty years ago :—

On Tuesday and Wednesday last that happy era of civil liberty, the Revolution of 1688, was celebrated in this place with the greatest concord and festivity. The morning of Tuesday was ushered in by the ringing of bells and other demonstrations of joy ; and at three o'clock the assembly of Gentlemen, who had met to commemorate the day by dining together at the Hotel, was more numerous and respectable than any ever known in the town. It consisted of the High Sheriff and the Members for the County, of

the Magistrates and principal persons of the town and neighbourhood, and of persons of every persuasion. The majority of the company was dressed in blue coats, with orange capes, having on beautiful emblematical buttons, manufactured by ingenious gentlemen of the town. They likewise wore, pendent on an orange ribbon, elegant silver medals, which were struck upon the occasion. Of these medals a quantity of a different metal were distributed among the populace. Our High Bailiff, Henry Clay, Esq., presided at the dinner, which did credit to the Masters of the Hotel; and after the cloth was drawn the following toasts were given:—

The King, and a speedy and perfect restoration of his health—The Glorious Revolution, and the immortal memory of the Great King William the Third—Old England and its Constitution—Queen and Royal Family—The Prince of Wales, and perpetuity to the Brunswick line—May the unanimity of this commemoration seal the extinction of parties—May posterity revere the principles of 1688, without being compelled to assert them—The universal propagation of liberty and benevolence—The memory of those who effected the Glorious Revolution, and may it never be forgotten by their descendants—May the principles of the Glorious Revolution never want supporters—May the King enjoy his rights and the people their liberties—The wooden walls of Old England—May the commerce of Old England increase, her navy flourish, her representatives be honest, and the people free—The friends of freedom throughout the World—The town and trade of Birmingham, and may commerce ever support and be supported by freedom—Mr. Howard, and the friends of Humanity throughout the World—Unanimity among all the sons of freedom—The man who dares be honest in the worst of times, &c., &c.

After the King's health had been drank, the music played and the song of *God save the King* was sung by a performer in the Orchestra, who was joined in chorus by every voice in the room, and early in the afternoon the following ODE, composed by a gentleman of the town, and set to music by Mr. Clarke, was performed under his direction.

RECITATIVE, ACCOMPANIED.

O GLORIOUS scene !

In fifteen hundred eighty-eight

A Virgin Queen,

With manly fortitude replete,

ELIZA ! whose immortal name,

Stands foremost on the roll of fame,

When the *Armada*, pride of *Spain*,

Beneath which groan'd the trembling main,

Appeared in view of Albion's coast,

She, fearless of the mighty host,

AIR.

The vaunting foe to meet,

Dispatch'd her nimble fleet,

Which long the fight maintain'd.

And blooming laurels gain'd ;

Till DRAKE and HOWARD on them bravely bore,

And dash'd them howling round her rocky shore.

RECIT., ACCOMPANIED.

The second JAMES
 Who bore in BRITAIN regal sway,
 Our annals shames,
 For *freedom* then expiring lay,
Religion hid her sacred head,
 And *Law*, by JEFFRIES frightened, fled,
 Despotie pow'r, her front uprear'd
 And nought but FREEDOM's plaints was heard :
 But when arriv'd the great Nassau,
 The friend of LIBERTY and LAW ;

AIR.

With generous rage inspir'd,
 With love of freedom fired,
 Our brave forefathers join'd
 The friend of human kind
 And hail'd him *Europe's Saviour* and their own,
 Then hurl'd the trembling tyrant from his throne.

RECIT., ACCOMPANIED.

The Storms of State
 Succeeded happiness unmix'd,
 And BRITAIN's fate
 Was on a solid basis fix'd.

DUET.

Now COMMERCE with her pleasing train,
 Of *Arts* and *Sciences* here obtain
 A lasting seat, the *Muses* here
 To *Fame* and *Freedom* ever dear.

CHORUS.

This glorious revolution
 Confirm'd our Constitution,
 And by a right divine
 Fix'd here the BRUNSWICK LINE ;
 Till time shall end may they reign o'er the free,
 And our great grandsons keep this JUBILEE.

Several songs written upon the occasion followed, the evening was spent with the greatest mirth, good humour, and harmony, and a great part of the company did not quit the room till between three and four o'clock the next morning.

At the Free-masons' and other taverns, different companies likewise met, to commemorate the day ; and at night the principal streets of the town were illuminated. The transparencies and ornamental lights at the Hotel were very beautiful ; over the door was a transparent portrait of King William ; in the window on the right a large transparency inscribed, "Sacred to the Immortal Memory of the Great and Glorious King William III. The Asserter of Liberty, and the Deliverer of Nations. The Preserver of Britain, and the Terror of France." In the window on the other side, "To the Immortal Memory of the

Great and Glorious King William III. He was Great without Pride, Valiant without Violence, Victorious without Ostentation, and Cautious without Fear." Over the portrait was a brilliant crown, and the initials G.R. were beautifully deciphered with variegated lamps. On Wednesday night a ball was given to the Ladies at the Hotel; the company was numerous and brilliant. The ladies were mostly in fancy dresses decorated with ribbands of blue and orange, and the gentlemen again appeared in their uniforms and medals; the latter of which were also worn by most of the ladies. Previous to the ball, the Ode was again performed in the room by a full band. The arrangement and conduct of this *Jubilee* throughout reflects honour upon the Stewards and Committee. There was not the least rioting in the streets, or accident of any consequence from the fireworks; all was orderly and peaceable, and every person who partook of the entertainment, perfectly satisfied and happy.

Here is a little side-light of the great commemoration :—

November 10, 1788.—On Wednesday (being the 5th of November) the officers of the town assembled and supped at the Shakespear Tavern, and spent the evening with much conviviality. They drank the following toasts :—The King—Church and Constitution as established by the REVOLUTION—The Queen and Royal Family—The present Ministry—Commerce and Navigation of Great Britain—Members for the County of Warwick—Baron of Birmingham—Success and unanimity to the trade and town of Birmingham.

The affair terminated in the formation of an Annual Revolution Union Club; which, however, did little more than assist in celebrating the Jubilee :—

REVOLUTION JUBILEE.

November 10, 1788.—At a meeting of the Committee, on Saturday the 8th of November, it was Resolved,—That the Subscription paper to the Annual Revolution Union Club do remain open for three months ONLY, in the hands of the present Stewards.

That the Committee consider it their indispensable Duty to make public Acknowledgment to their Neighbours of every Class, for their very regular and peaceable Behaviour on the Jubilee Nights.

That this Committee, on Behalf of themselves and the general Body of Subscribers, return their best Thanks to the Stewards for their obliging and unwearied attentions upon the occasion, and for the Judicious manner in which the whole was conducted.

HENRY CLAY, Esq., Chairman.

THE BALLOON MANIA.

This decade was distinguished by the commencement of ærial navigation; which rapidly grew into a popular mania. The first ascent made in England was by Signor Lunardi, who ascended from Moorfields, London, on September 15, 1784. He was followed by Blanchard and Jeffries, who, in 1785, made their celebrated journey from Dover to Calais. All the country rung with this achievement. Nothing was spoken of but air balloons, and "argosies of magic sails." It became

the absorbing topic of the day, and Birmingham early participated in the enthusiasm. On the 9th of February, 1784, Mr. Sadler ascended from Oxford. The balloon rose at half-past one, and fell about four on the same day, at Stanted, in Kent, upwards of 79 miles distance from Oxford. "Mr. Sadler, we (*Aris's Gazette*) understand is constructing another balloon, which, when completed, will Measure 54 feet in circumference, and contain 22,842 gallons. It is to be filled with air extracted from burnt wood, a method entirely new, and which has hitherto been unattempted in this kingdom."

In November of the same year the Birmingham people are informed that

"The balloon with which Mr. Sadler, of Oxford, lately ascended, will next week, with the whole of the apparatus, be brought to this Town and exhibited in the Theatre, and two gentlemen will, in a short time afterwards, ascend with it from this place."

This editorial paragraph was followed by an advertisement :—

ÆROSTATION.

Birmingham, November 25, 1784.—Mr. Sadler, of Oxford, presents his compliments to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Birmingham, and its neighbourhood, and respectfully informs them that the Grand Balloon, with which he attended the twelfth of this instant, at Oxford, is now suspended at the New Theatre, and will be exhibited for public inspection, together with the car and the whole of the apparatus, every day, from ten in the morning till eight in the evening (when himself and his brother, will personally attend), previous to its ascending from a convenient place in the vicinity of this town. Persons desirous of gratifying their curiosity by examining this splendid machine, are requested to attend as early as possible, or they will have no opportunity of seeing it here after it has ascended.—Admittance One Shilling each.

The balloon came and was exhibited. If the following impromptu is to be accepted literally, the exhibition was very successful, and the price of admission satisfactorily low :—

December 6, 1784.

IMPROMPTU.

On Seeing MR. SADLER'S BALLOON.

The Stately *Balloon*, that's an Englishman's boast !
(Whilst crowds to the Pantheon drive),
With amazement I view !—but *One Shilling* the cost,
I would not have missed it for *five*.

Mr. Harper was the aeronaut who was to ascend in Mr. Sadler's balloon. On December 13, this notice appeared :—

"We hear that Mr. Harper, whose intention it was to ascend with his Balloon the week before Christmas, has, at the desire of many Ladies and Gentlemen, deferred his aerial tour till the Holidays."

The excitement increased. The balloon was removed from the Theatre to the Tennis Court, in Coleshill Street, and a day was named for the ascent. These particulars are given in the following advertisement :—

December 20, 1784.—Mr. HARPER respectfully informs the Public, that the exhibition of his Balloon closed on Saturday last for a few days ; that he will unavoidably be at a very great Expense in fitting up the Tennis Court, and filling the Globe ; he therefore wishes those Ladies and Gentlemen who wish to encourage him, and intend honouring him with their company on the day of his Ascending, the 29th instant, will apply as early as possible for Tickets.

N.B. A very strong Platform is erecting by an experienced workman, where Ladies and Gentlemen will be perfectly secure, and have the whole command of the Process ; and great care will be taken that they meet with no obstruction in coming to the Tennis-Court.

The first attempt was a failure, and, as was only too frequently the case on such occasions, the mob created a disturbance. It was only by a bit of good luck that the balloon escaped destruction.

January 3, 1785.—In consequence of repeated advertisements in the papers announcing Mr. Harper's intention of ascending from this place in Mr. Sadler's Balloon, strangers of every denomination, in carriages, upon horses, and on foot, crowded into this town from all parts of the Country ; and on Wednesday morning incredible numbers poured in from break of day till eleven o'clock (the hour fixed for the balloon's ascending). The bells were rung at Nine, which was the signal by which Mr. Harper informed the public it was his intention to ascend that day, and that the balloon was filling ; but unfortunately through a failure in the process, it was found impossible to launch the machine that morning. As soon as this was known to the surrounding multitude, they assailed the scaffolding erected for the accommodation of those who had paid for seeing the balloon filled, at first throwing sticks and stones over it, and at length proceeding to pull it down, which they partly effected, notwithstanding the spirited exertions of the constables, and officers, and other gentlemen of the town, some of whom were much hurt. Four of the rioters were taken into custody ; one had his skull fractured, but we are happy to say no lives were lost. The balloon was luckily conveyed away before the mob had got into the Tennis Court, otherwise it would certainly have been destroyed. Tuesday next is the day fixed upon for the second trial, which we doubt not but will succeed, from the united endeavours of the several scientific gentlemen who have undertaken to assist Mr. Harper. As soon as the balloon is filled that day, the bells of St. Philip's Church will ring, and an hour afterwards Mr. Harper purposes to take his ærial tour.

In consequence of the disturbance that happened on Wednesday, four men were lodged in the dungeon for assaults, and damage done to the platform, &c., in the Tennis-Court, and one man for assaulting Mr. Freeth, the constable ; but the Magistrates, unwilling that these alone should suffer for the faults that many others were concerned in, have discharged them, upon their making proper concessions for their offences.

We hope the extreme lenity shown to the above Men will prevent similar disturbances upon the day when the Balloon is to ascend; and have authority from the *Magistrates* to inform the public, that all persons guilty of the like offences will be punished according to law.

The first ascent was made on Tuesday, January 4. The following is the report of this notable event:—

January 10, 1785.—On Tuesday morning last in consequence of the ringing of the bells in St. Philip's Church, the signal by which Mr. Harper informed the public that the Balloon was nearly filled; and that it was his intention, notwithstanding the fog and rain which was continually falling, to ascend that day: one of the most numerous concourse of people of every denomination, of strangers and inhabitants, on foot and in carriages, which has at any time, perhaps, been collected in this town, assembled at the Tennis-court, and thronged all the adjacent parts. Dr. Withering, Mr. Southern, and other scientific gentlemen had kindly undertaken to superintend the filling of the machine, which was completed by 12 o'clock; and about a quarter of an hour afterwards Mr. Harper with great resolution and composure, seated himself in the car, amidst the acclamations of the spectators. Two ladies, after presenting him with a pair of flags, launched the balloon, which slowly rising over the scaffolding of the platform, exhibited one of the most pleasing and sublime spectacles. After it had rose for a few seconds, it suddenly descended almost upon the heads of the multitude that occupied the ground behind the Tennis-court; but Mr. Harper throwing out some ballast, instantly re-ascended with the greatest rapidity, and bearing away in the direction of N. by N.W. was (owing to the hazy and foggy weather) out of sight in about a minute and a half. In the first six minutes after his ascension, the rain fell very heavily, but in four minutes more he had shot above the cloud, and with a clear sun shining upon him, he passed through the purest ether, making such observations as his philosophical friends had suggested.

The barometer at the time of his ascent stood at twenty-eight inches and three-eighths, which indicated a degree of raining of the atmosphere not frequently known, which, together with the larger quantity of water that had accumulated upon the balloon and its surrounding net, very considerably diminished the power of the ascent of the machine. The cold was by no means so intense as might naturally have been expected, as the thermometer at no time was lower than twenty-eight degrees on Fahrenheit's scale; at his ascent it stood at forty: He gradually ascended for the space of thirty minutes, at which time it is computed, he was elevated four thousand three hundred feet above the earth.

The course of Mr. Harper's voyage was directly over Staffordshire, and at Trentham, the seat of Earl Gower, he had descended so low as to make himself heard by a person in the Park, whom he hailed with his speaking trumpet, and enquired of him how far it was to Birmingham. "Forty miles, master," says the honest countryman, "but you are going the wrong road." At length, about two o'clock, the air of the balloon being much expended, he finally descended at Milstone Green, near Newcastle-under-Lyen, fifty miles from this place, having performed his long voyage in the short space of only *one hour and twenty-eight minutes*. Mr. Harper when he descended, did not suppose he was many miles from Birmingham, and therefore had not thrown out much of his ballast; he meant to have arose again, after enquiring what progress he had made: but on account of the wind and weather, he says, he found it impracticable to proceed. It happened very

unfortunately, that about a mile from the place at which he alighted, several bottles of air, which he had collected in different heights of the atmosphere, for Dr. Priestley's philosophical experiments, were broken by his striking a tree; and the car, with his instruments, were almost totally[†] demolished by the hedges and trees, through which he was for a long way dragged at the time the balloon was descending, till he was at length relieved by a friendly blacksmith, who caught his hand and assisted him in alighting. Mr. Harper, with his balloon, went post to Lichfield that same evening, and the next morning arrived here, when he was drawn by the populace (who took his horses from the carriage) in triumph through the streets, attended by several gentlemen and ladies in carriages and on horseback, with blue cockades, colours, &c., &c.

A subscription is begun for the second aerial voyage Mr. Harper purposes to take from hence, and as an indemnification for the great expence he has incurred for the gratification of the public; and we hope the contributions will be sufficiently liberal to prevent his being a sufferer, and make him ample amends for his losses and disappointments.

Mr. Harper became the hero of the day. As we have seen from the above report, he was drawn in triumph through the town. The ladies were especially enthusiastic in their admiration, and one gushing creature, named Emma (we wish that her surname had been given), thus apostrophised the "favoured youth" in verse:—

July 10, 1785.—To the Printers.—Gentlemen,—By inserting the following Address to Mr. HARPER, on his late Aerial Expedition, in your weekly paper, you will oblige,

A CONSTANT READER.

Hail! favour'd youth, Britannia's future boast,
The Muse's favourite theme,—The Fair-one's toast,
Whose towering spirit, fearless, mov'd along
Heaven's wide expanse—to please a gazing throng;
While to retard thy flight, and aid thy fears,
Aurora frown'd—then soften'd into tears.

Yet, tho' bright Sol bestow'd no cheering smile,
To *raise* this second Phoenix of our isle,
Still shall each liberal mind its tribute pour,
And the rich *Hive** exhaust its ample store;
While Genius, Science, Arts and Taste combined,
Shall, round thy brow, the well-earn'd trophy bind.

Not Philip's son,† in his triumphal Car,
Tho' vanquish'd monarchs hail'd him God of War,
Could greater glory, greater triumph prove,
The *Fair* thy captives, and their fetters *Love*,
Hail! then, distinguished youth! Britannia's boast,
Apollo's darling, and the reigning toast.

EMMA.

* Alluding to the Arms of Birmingham.

† Alexander the Great.

Another versifyer thus alludes to the event :—

January 10, 1785.—*Aura Popularis* : or *The Air-Balloon*. On the late effects of Mr. Harper's Balloon ; addressed to the Premier, Mr. Fox, &c., &c., &c.

If it be true as learned Fellows
Of Colleges and such folks tell us,
“ Effects are equal to their cause,”
How light is popular applause !
Lighter than air, since smoke can raise
A mob's displeasure or its praise ;
Its praise, like smoke, too, vanishes as soon,
’Tis all a bubble, or an Air-Balloon.

EX FUMO LUX.

A poem in two Cantos, called the *Ballooniad* was published. The first edition was rapidly exhausted, and the publication of the second was announced in these rather “ inflated ” terms.

January 31, 1785.—To afford those Ladies and Gentlemen who, on Account of the rapid Sale of the first Edition, might probably lose the much wished-for opportunity of perusing so truly sublime, grand, and beautiful a work ; This Day is published, Price 3d., the second Edition of *The Ballooniad*, In two Cantos, The first containing an Account of the Circumstances attending the unsuccessful Attempt of the justly celebrated Aerial Adventurer at Birmingham ; the second describing his Ascent, his Interview with the Man of the Moon, and other Particulars. Sold by all Booksellers in Town and Country.

On the same day this very curious paragraph appeared :—

January 31, 1785.—A correspondent, in tenderness to the pregnant and prolific muse of the very sublime and elegant Author of the *Ballooniad*, wishes to lend an helping hand to prevent the dreadful consequence of an abortion in her next hour of perilous labour, by informing him that Strap is not a feature of Mr. Harper's profession, which was not of the honourable order of Puffs ; but begging he will substitute the more distinguishing appellation of Ragman : Mr. Harper having served an apprenticeship to Mr. Hayward, Linen Draper, Oxford-street, London.

A second ascent was to have been made on Monday, January 31, but it did not come off until Tuesday, the 1st of February. The circumstances are narrated in the following passage :—

Monday last being the day Mr. Harper purposed to take his second aerial flight, and of which he had apprized the public by advertisements, a greater number of carriages filled with strangers than has perhaps been known to have assembled at any time in this town arrived early in the morning, and the concourse of people from all the neighbouring places was astonishingly great. Unfortunately, though the sky was extremely clear, and the day in every other respect as fine as could be wished, the wind was so very high and boisterous, that it was found impracticable to fill the balloon, and Mr. Harper was unavoidably obliged, to the great disappointment of the multitude assembled upon the occasion, to postpone his ascent until the next day, which, proving more calm, the process of filling the machine commenced, under the direction of Mr. Southern (who

superintended that business on the day of Mr. Harper's last ascent) assisted by Mr. Argand, the gentleman who had the conduct of filling the balloons of Messrs. Montgolfier, Charles and Roberts, and Blanchard in France. At twelve o'clock Mr. Harper was seated in the car, the gentlemen who attended deeming the machine sufficiently inflated; but they found it impossible, from the pressure and intrusion of the company (which had all along impeded the operations) to ascertain with any degree of certainty, the power of the balloon's ascent, and the quantity of ballast with which it should be charged. Under this and other disadvantageous circumstances it was launched, and driven with some violence against the high wall of the Tennis-Court, which, however, it cleared, and was descending, when Mr. Harper throwing out some ballast, it was carried with rapidity in an horizontal direction, by a brisk wind, against a garret window in an adjacent yard. In this situation it continued some time, and a large rent having been made in the machine, which was much agitated by the wind, the company at the window seized Mr. Harper's arm, and forcibly took him out of the car. An attempt was now made to bring back the balloon to the Tennis-Court, to repair the damage it had received, and a man entered the car to keep the machine down, to which also a cord was affixed for that purpose; but by some accident the cord was soon broken, and the balloon, ascending with the man in the car, was carried over the street and several back houses into a garden, where the populace pursued it, and taking all the ballast out of it, they finally let off the machine, which, bearing away in a S.S.E. direction, flew with great velocity, and was in a few minutes out of sight. No accounts have yet been received where it fell.

The light-fingered fraternity were busy on this occasion; and the doings of one sharper are worth quoting. The writer says:—

The pockets of several Gentlemen were picked on Tuesday last, at the time the Balloon was being let off. One of the pickpockets, who had robbed an old man of his purse, being pursued, was apprehended, and is now in our dungeon. The same evening a young man, who pretended he had come a long way to see the Balloon, went to the Three Tuns in Colmore-street, and desired a lodging for the night, as he could not possibly return home. This house is kept by an old man and woman, who permitted him to have a bed for the night. Soon after he retired, the maid-servant was sent up stairs for his candle, which he refused to give her, saying he would put it out himself. The family went to bed without having any suspicion of the stranger, who, about one o'clock in the morning, came to the old man and woman's chamber door, desiring that they would get out of the house as fast as they could, for that his candle, which he had neglected to put out, had set fire to the bed, and that the house would soon be in flames. The old man instantly unlocked his door, and came with his wife to the top of the stairs, where they were stopped by the villian and an accomplice he had let in, who presented pistols to them, and demanded all they had. The old man struggled some time with one of them, and they cruelly beat both him and his wife. They then robbed the house of about 50 shillings in half-pence, and of gold and silver to the amount of about seven pounds, and made off without being discovered. One of them left behind him his shoes, buckles, and hat. The villian who first came to the house was dressed in a dark drab grey coat, dark under coat, and yellow shag rough waistcoat. He had his hair tied, was pale faced, and his features were small.

In another paragraph, which was also published on February 7, we have these additional particulars:—

Birmingham, February 2, 1785.—The Misfortune that attended Mr. Harper's Balloon, on Tuesday last, was owing to the obstinate Proceedings of certain Persons, whose presuming Ignorance prevailed on him not to have the Balloon filled, nor the Cord fixed to the Car, as he had agreed to do by the Advice of Mr. Charles Jarvis on Saturday last, who pointed out the Danger of the Wall, and who had almost the whole of the Trouble and Care in preparing the Balloon with the Apparatus on Tuesday last, and also on the 4th of January, the Day of Mr. Harper's first Ascent, though it was not mentioned before; but he was not concerned in, nor near the Process when the Blunder was made, on the twenty-ninth Day of December last. Mr. Jarvis wished to have the Balloon Half-an-Hour longer on the Receiver of the Cistern, as there was Time enough, and from which another Balloon that size might have been filled if required; and he had procured a Cord forty yards long for the Purpose of guiding it above the Buildings, in order to prevent its being driven against the Wall of the Court, which is upwards of 34 Feet high, as well as to ascertain the proper quantity of Ballast with which it ought to have been charged, and to afford as much pleasure as possible to the Populace. But Mr. Harper was persuaded that the Elasticity of the air would take him nearly perpendicular, and that the Sun's Rays would expand his Gas and nearly fill the Balloon. There is no Doubt but the great Disappointment which the numerous genteel Spectators experienced on the Occasion was entirely owing to the Want of this Cord, which Mr. Jarvis earnestly requested (a few Minutes before the Ascent) might be fixed to the Car, but was refused; and whose Advice Mr. Harper most severely regrets not having taken. Mr. Jarvis has not received the least Satisfaction whatever for his trouble.

The Balloon dropped at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, about 14 miles from Bath, where it was found by the country people, who suspended it in a barn, and exhibited to strangers at one penny admittance.

Of course such a mania could not be excited without producing evil results. Fire balloons became the common and popular amusement of the boys of the time, to the great danger of property, especially hay stacks and farm produce. Accordingly the authorities had to prohibit them; and on February 28, the following notice was published:—

Birmingham, February 26, 1785.—Whereas it has been a common Practice of sending up Fire Balloons in various Parts of the Town for some time past, and Information having been given that several Accidents of setting Fire to Out-buildings, Inn-yards, &c., have been nearly taking Place, to the great Danger and Destruction of Property as well as Safety of the Town, at the Request of the Magistrates and many respectable Inhabitants, the Officers do hereby give this public notice, that they are determined to punish, with the utmost Rigour of the Law, all Persons who shall be found offending in the like Manner, in future. And in order to detect such Offenders, do hereby offer a handsome Reward to those Persons who will give Information thereof to the Constables.

This advertisement was repeated several times, and to one, which was inserted on May 2, this paragraph was added:—

And whereas, last Week, a Balloon fell near a large Quantity of Hay and was nearly setting Fire thereto, One Guinea Reward will be given to any Person or Persons giving Information of Offenders in future, by applying to the Constables, Mr. Charles Freeth and Mr. Clowes.

On May 16 we read this rather curious advertisement :—

AIR BALLOON.

Birmingham, May 16, 1785.—The Incomparable Gold and Silver Air Balloon, which Mr. Dicker ascended with from Bristol; April 19, 1785, and went Twenty-nine Miles in Thirty Minutes, is now exhibiting every Day in the Theatre, King Street, from Ten o'Clock in the Morning till Eight in the Evening.

This Balloon is the smallest that ever ascended with a Man, being only 21 Feet Diameter and 63 Feet in Circumference; it is made entirely of Gold Beaters' Skin, and the only one ever made of these Materials to ascend with a Man; it is gilt all over, and ornamented with Stars, Festoons, &c. Admittance for Ladies and Gentlemen One Shilling; Children and Servants, Six Pence. If the Inhabitants of this Town are desirous of seeing the Balloon ascend with a Person, the Proprietor begs Leave to inform them that upon a Subscription being raised to reimburse the very heavy Expences attending such an Enterprise, the Money to be deposited in a Banker's Hands, for the Purpose of paying the same immediately after the Accomplishment of his Design, or on any Failure on his Part for it to be returned to the several Subscribers, he on these Conditions engages for either himself or Mr. Dicker to ascend in some open and convenient Place near this Town.

On the 23rd of the same month another advertisement was published, by which it appears that this "incomparable balloon" was the property of Mr. Cracknell, a native of Birmingham. The *fun* had evidently decreased, for Mr. Cracknell appeals to the public in the tone of a disappointed man. His hopes had been blighted, and he could not help expressing his mortification, which he does as follows :—

AIR BALLOON.

Birmingham, May 23, 1785.—When Mr. Cracknell, the Proprietor of the incomparable Balloon, now exhibiting every day in the Theatre, King-street, first proposed ascending with his Balloon in this Town, or its neighbourhood, he doubted not but that a Subscription, sufficient at least to defray the Expenses of his Expedition, would readily have been completed; but Experience has proved the Fallacy of his Hopes, and he cannot help expressing the Mortification he feels in finding his Expectations so much disappointed: However he here returns his sincere Thanks to those few who have already patronized him, and assures the Public, that nothing would give him greater Pleasure than to ascend here, in his native Place, in order to convince them that an Englishman can gratify their curiosity by various evolutions in the Air, equal, if not superior to Blanchard, or any other Foreigner whatever. He therefore humbly hopes that the generous and impartial Public will immediately come forth, and give him such Countenance and Support as will reimburse the very heavy expences attending his hazardous Enterprise. Subscriptions at Five Shillings, are received by Messrs. Pearson and Rollason, T. Sketchley, in Moor-street, G. Cracknell, the Bell, on the Worcester Road, and at the Theatre in King-street. The Exhibition at the Theatre will finally close on Saturday night next.

N.B. Seeing an Advertisement in the Thursday's Paper, that Mr. Blanchard intends coming down with his Balloon here, in order to ascend, Mr. Cracknell hereby assures the Public that (should he come) he will ascend at the same Place and Time as he shall, in order that the Public may judge which has the most merit.

The satirist had his word to say on the ærial epidemic which was then afflicting the town, and he said it thus :—

December 26, 1785.

TASTE A-LA-MODE.

Wou'd you be reckon'd, Sir, a Man of Skill,
Make Air Balloons—erect a Rolling Mill ;
These are the Arts engage the present day.
Should Fashion change they both must soon decay :
What Whims will then succeed 'tis hard to say.

LYSANDER.

And so, for a time, the balloon mania passed away to give place to other fancies less lofty in their aspirations, but perhaps not less useful in their results :—

BIRMINGHAM AND THE SLAVE TRADE.

Every Birmingham man will rejoice to learn that this town took an active part in the noblest philanthropic labour of the age—the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The efforts of Granville Sharp, of Wilberforce, of Clarkson, and their worthy compeers were ably seconded in this town by such worthies as Dr. Priestley, the Rev. C. Curtis, the Rev. Spencer Madan, the Rev. J. Riland, Matthew Boulton, Charles Lloyd, Samuel Garbett, William Russell, and others. Clarkson came to Birmingham in 1787, and in his *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, we find this brief record of his visit :—

“From Keddleston I turned off to Birmingham, being desirous of visiting Bristol on my way to London, to see if anything new had occurred since I was there. I was introduced by letter, at Birmingham, to Sampson and Charles Lloyd, the brothers of John Lloyd, belonging to our committee, and members of the religious society of Quakers. I was highly gratified in finding that these, in conjunction with Mr. Russell, had been attempting to awaken the attention of the inhabitants to this great subject, and that in consequence of their laudable efforts, a spirit was beginning to shew itself there, as at Manchester, in favour of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The kind manner in which these received me, and the deep interest which they appeared to take in our cause, led me to an esteem for them, which by means of subsequent visits, grew into a solid friendship.”*

* *History of the Slave Trade*, vol. 1. p. 426.

The opponents of the trade in this town set to work with earnestness, and followed up Mr. Clarkson's visit with renewed activity. In the beginning of the next year we find the following announcement :—

January 7, 1788.—It must give great Pleasure to those who rejoice in the Happiness of their Fellow creatures, to be informed that the Slave Trade, and Treatment of the Negroes in our West India Islands, are likely to become the Subjects of Parliamentary Investigation soon after the Recess.

The Slave Trade has long been a Disgrace to Europe, and is a violation of the Christian Law of doing to others as we would they should do unto us ; for we certainly can have no better right to force the poor Negroes from their native Country into Slavery, than they can have to force us from our native Country into Slavery ; and it will redound to the Honour of Britons to stand foremost in the Care of those oppressed People.

A Society was formed in London, sometime ago, with a view to draw the Attention of the Nation to the inconceivable Miseries which the Africans sustain, in consequence of the Slave Trade ; and their Labours have been attended with great Success. Many liberal Men contributed to defray the necessary Expences, and these Subscriptions have lately extended into the Country.

There was a Meeting at Birmingham on the 27th of November, when it was instantly determined to send one Hundred Guineas to the Society in London, to forward their humane Views ; it appears that Two Hundred Guineas have been sent from Manchester. We hear that both the Universities have the Subject under Consideration, and that several Places are taking Measures, in Hopes of obtaining from Parliament some immediate relief for the severe Sufferings of the present Slaves, and ultimately the Abolition of the inhuman traffic. It cannot be doubted that the Towns where this Paper circulates will do honour to their Country by manifesting benevolent Sentiments on the Occasion.

The following are the Committee chosen here to correspond with the Committee of the Society in London, and other Committees, and take such further Steps as they may think proper.

The Rev. CHARLES CURTIS, Rector of St. Martin's.

The Rev. SPENCER MADAN, Rector of St. Philip's.

On February 4, Dr. Priestley published a sermon which he had delivered on the 23rd of the preceding month. He took for his text the words from the Acts of the Apostles, "And hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men to dwell on all the face of the earth. It was an eloquent and forcible discourse, and must have found favour even with those who, on religious subjects, had such bitter differences with the Unitarian Divine. This was succeeded by a public meeting on the subject, of which we have this report :—

SLAVE TRADE.

Birmingham, January 28, 1788.—At a numerous and respectable Meeting of Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood at the Hotel (in consequence of public Advertisement) to consider a Petition to Parliament for the Abolition of Slavery, the following Resolutions were proposed by different Gentlemen, and unanimously agreed to, viz :—

First, That the practice of going to Africa to purchase Men to sell for Slaves should be publicly execrated.

Second, That, as Englishmen and Christians, it behoves us to exert our best Endeavours to abolish Slavery.

Third, That it is the Duty of this Meeting to petition Parliament to take into Consideration the inhuman Practice of purchasing harmless Men, Women, and Children, to sell in British Dominions for Slaves, and to restrain the Cruelties that are inflicted upon them, and earnestly to solicit Relief for our Fellow-creatures.

A Committee was then desired to withdraw and prepare a Petition to the Tenor of the above Resolutions, which they did, and the same was unanimously approved.

Resolved, That the Tribute of Thanks so properly forwarded in an early Stage of the Business to the Gentlemen associated in London for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, be now repeated in Behalf of the Town, together with an Assurance that it is a sensible Pleasure to us to render this public Testimony of the high Satisfaction and Approbation with which we regard the Zeal, Diligence, and Perseverance they have manifested in this GENEROUS CAUSE—a Cause wherein Humanity is so much interested and so much honoured.

The Thanks of the Meeting were also presented to the Committee and Chairman, for their very laudable Conduct in this Business, and they were requested to publish these Resolutions in some of the Newspapers.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

The following is a copy of the petition adopted at the meeting : —

February 11, 1788.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament Assembled.—The Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of the Town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That the practice of enslaving any part of mankind is seldom, if ever, justifiable.

That, nevertheless, such a practice subsists in a very extensive degree, even among the members of this free nation, by forcing the natives of Africa into Slavery, for the cultivation of the British West-Indian Islands.

That, added to the primary injustice of such a conduct, frequent instances of needless severities, and arbitrary cruelties, are undoubtedly exhibited, rendering that heavy yoke of slavery still more oppressive to its victims, and still more disgraceful to its abettors.

That, as inhabitants of a manufacturing town and neighbourhood, your petitioners have the commercial interests of this kingdom very deeply at heart ; but cannot conceal their detestation of any commerce which always originates in violence, and too often terminates in cruelty.

That, as Englishmen ever anxious to support the cause of Freedom, they would wish, in the present instance, to give example to the neighbouring powers of Europe, by proclaiming Liberty to the Captive, and by opening the prison to them that are bound.

That, as Christians, they are further persuaded that the Slave Trade is repugnant to the principles of Christianity and a disgrace to a Christian Country.

That your Petitioners, at the same Time, would not presume to suggest any express mode of parliamentary interference on this occasion ; but humbly represent their most earnest prayers, that, in the clemency, as well as wisdom of Parliament, some means may be found for the IMMEDIATE RELIEF and future Protection of their injured fellow-creatures,

the ENSLAVED AFRICANS ; nor can your Petitioners suppress their very anxious hopes that a total ABOLITION of such inhuman traffic may ultimately receive the sanction of this Assembly ; an Assembly (they are confident) not more the Assertor of Constitutional Liberty, than the Friend of UNIVERSAL JUSTICE.

This work, like every other good one in this world, had its opponents. We know how long self-interest contested the battle, and to what expense the abolitionists were driven before they completed their labour of love. This opposition found a voice and an exponent in this town. A pamphlet was published, entitled "A proposal for the Consideration of those who interest themselves in the Abolition or Prevention of the Slave Trade." The strictures of this writer may be gathered from a reply to them which appeared on February 11 :—

To the Printers of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTEE.

February 11th, 1788.—GENTLEMEN, Many of your Readers have probably seen a Pamphlet entitled "A Proposal for the Consideration of those who interest themselves in the Abolition or Prevention of the Slave Trade," as some of them may possibly be induced, by the very respectable character of the reputed author, to adopt his sentiments without due investigation ; I wish them to consider whether even the following short observations do not show that his good intentions have, in this instance, blinded his judgment.

The author (page 8) states that the end in view is the happiness of the Negroes. This, Gentlemen, is undoubtedly an object extremely desired by the friends of the Abolition ; but the primary end at which they aim is to free this nation from the guilt of an iniquitous and unchristian traffic. They are of opinion that a part of this guilt will rest upon the head of every man who does not avail himself of the present favourable conjuncture, and contribute his utmost endeavours to put a stop to a commerce founded on injustice.

That this description must apply to the Slave Trade under every regulation cannot be denied. If our Merchants are permitted to purchase Slaves on the Coast of Africa, it is impossible that any regulations can restrain them from purchasing the innocent. Numbers will still be kidnapped by their countrymen ; numbers will still be seized by the despotic hand of the native prince, taken prisoners in unjust wars, and condemned for trifling or pretended crimes. With such iniquity the trade is inseparably connected. This being the case, I am certain the author will not contend that any beneficial consequences resulting from the traffic, no, not even the introduction of christianity among the Africans, ought to be purchased on such terms. If it might, the Dey of Algiers would be justified in enslaving us, in hopes of promoting our salvation by making us sound Mussulmen. No, Gentlemen, the author himself, to his honour (page 11), strenuously opposes the principle of doing evil that good may come. If he had considered the whole of his subject in that point of view, he would not have afforded me the opportunity of writing these remarks.

With respect to the plan contained in the pamphlet, though I cannot profess myself convinced of its practicability, or to the solidity of the whole of the reasoning by which it is supported, it is unnecessary for me to consider it in detail. For the reasons which I have given, the principle of it is inadmissible.

I heartily join with the author in the humane wish that the interposition of Parliament may procure effectual relief for the Negroes in the West-Indies, and that equitable means

may speedily be devised and put in practice for the introduction of the Christian faith into those countries which we have so long laid waste.

I am, &c., AMICUS.

This letter was met by one which advocated the specious but impracticable plan of regulation :—

To the Printers of the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

February 18, 1788.—Gentlemen, Your Correspondent, *Amicus*, in his Strictures on a Pamphlet (advertised in your Paper, and entitled a Proposal, &c. on the Slave Trade) has observed that the author has proceeded upon a false Principle, in supposing that the End in View, with those who wish to abolish the Slave Trade, is the HAPPINESS OF THE NEGROES. On the contrary, I presume, that this not only is, but that in general the Advocates of Abolition WISH IT TO BE THOUGHT, their principal Object. And a very noble one it is; far superior, in my opinion, to that which your Correspondent has attributed to them as their PRIMARY End in View, A DESIRE TO FREE THIS NATION FROM THE GUILT OF PURSUING AN INQUITOUS TRAFFIC. But that AMICUS may be convinced that this is properly a SECONDARY Object, I must beg him to consider why the Traffic is iniquitous, but because it makes THE NEGROES MISERABLE? I must also Remark, that if he had perused the Pamphlet with Attention, he would have found an answer to his other Objections, in the following Deductions viz. :—That the Protection of the Slaves in the West Indies, and Encouragement of their Population by LAWS, would wonderfully diminish the Demand for Slaves; that the unfair and cruel Methods of obtaining Slaves now practiced, would consequently be discouraged and cease. But as, in the inevitable Wars of Barbarous Nations, there will always be many Captives taken, who, if left in the Power of their Conquerors would be murdered, tortured, eat by Cannibals, &c., so, if our Planters, having purchased these, shall place them in a mild Servitude (for such the laws should make Slavery) they will then render them less unhappy than such Slaves would be if the Slave Trade were to be abolished. If, therefore, the Motive of AMICUS for abolishing the Slave Trade be the FEAR OF NATIONAL GUILT, he may allay this Fear under the Plan of Regulation here proposed; for surely there can be no guilt in rendering poor Wretches less unhappy than they would otherwise have been in their own country.

I am, &c.,

REGULATOR.

As well as holding meetings, passing resolutions, and adopting petitions, the Birmingham people, according to their wont, showed their earnestness by raising subscriptions. The spirit in which they worked will be seen by this extract :—

Birmingham Hotel, April 9, 1789.—At a Meeting convened by public Advertisement, in consequence of the Resolution of Parliament to take the Abolition of the Slave Trade into Consideration, and of its being intimated by the London Committee that further Subscriptions were necessary, it was

Resolved, That Mr. Charles Lloyd is authorized by this Meeting to remit One Hundred Guineas to the Committee instituted in London for the Purpose of effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

Resolved, That the Chairman is requested to write to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, Baronets, Members of Parliament for this County, expressing our anxious Hopes to see the Slave Trade abolished, and earnestly entreating their Attention to this great Cause of Humanity.

Resolved, To adjourn to Friday, the 17th instant, at the Hotel, at Five o'Clock in the Afternoon.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

N.B.—Subscriptions will be received by Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds, at the Bank.

A correspondent under the signature A. Z. wrote a long and rather vituperative letter in defence of the shameful trade. This brief reply appeared on May 11, 1789 :—

To the Printers.

Your correspondent, A. Z., in his introduction to the translation of the King of Spain's edict, reflects on the conduct of those who, HE SAYS, are MADLY endeavouring to abolish the Slave-trade.

Does A. Z. recollect the Command of our Saviour, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." What more right have we to force the poor Africans into slavery than they have to force us into slavery? If they had this power, and exercised it upon him, would A. Z. consider those as madmen who pleaded for the common rights of mankind, and endeavoured to abolish such an abominable traffic.

FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CÆLUM.

Another meeting was held on this subject at the Public Office, Dale End, on the 19th of May. This meeting was called at the request of several gentlemen by James Pickard and Thomas Green, our two constables, and the following is the record of the business transacted :—

Birmingham Hotel, May 19, 1789.—At a very numerous Meeting, in consequence of the following Advertisement in the BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE :—

"Birmingham, May 18, 1789.—We are desired by several Gentlemen to request the Attendance of the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham, at the Public Office, Dale End, To-morrow, the 19th instant, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, to take into consideration a Petition to Parliament, that the African Slave Trade (which is so greatly and extensively Beneficial to this Town and Neighbourhood) may not be abolished, but undergo such Regulations only as are Conducive to Humanity.

JAMES PICKARD, }
THOMAS GREEN, } Constables."

Upon meeting at the Public Office, it was observed that the Room was not sufficient to contain the great Number that would attend, it was therefore agreed to adjourn to the Hotel,

When Mr. GARBETT was chosen Chairman. *The following Resolutions were made by a very great Majority :—*

Resolved, That the Resolutions, with the Petition of the town of Birmingham for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in January, 1788, unanimously resolved on at a Public Meeting called for that Purpose by three Advertisements in the public Papers, be now read. Which being done, it was then desired that the Constables give up the Names of

those Gentlemen under whose sanction they had called the Town together to refute all their former Proceedings in the Business before us, when the Names of eight of this Town, chiefly Manufacturers interested in the Trade, were delivered by Mr. James Pickard, one of the Constables. It was then

RESOLVED, That no Opposition having been made to this Petition, either at the Time or since, though Notice has been repeatedly given in the House of Commons of a Motion being intended to be made for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the House having now discovered a Disposition to comply with the numerous Petitions presented in favour of the oppressed Africans, it would be highly improper for the Town of Birmingham to present a Petition directly contrary to the former, which had received unanimous Approbation.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq., for the very able Manner in which he has introduced the Business of the Slave Trade into the House of Commons; and that it is our earnest Wish that his intended Motion for an Abolition of this disgraceful Traffic may be crowned with Success.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of the Meeting are presented to the Chairman.

RESOLVED, That these Resolutions should be printed in the Birmingham and some of the London Newspapers.

SAMUEL GARBETT, Chairman.

Gustavus Vasa, the African, visited Birmingham this year, and increased the indignation of the friends of the slave by the circulation of his narrative. He received, to use his own words, "great marks of kindness from the undermentioned gentlemen of this town, who have subscribed to my narrative, particularly to Messrs. Charles and Sampson Lloyd, and families, and Dr. Gilby." Then follow over thirty others, including such well-known philanthropists and famous Birmingham names as Dr. Johnstone, Taylor, Garbett, Galton, Russell, Riland, Boulton, Freer, and Dr. Priestley. The African thus expresses his acknowledgment:—

I beg you to suffer me thus publicly to express my grateful acknowledgments for their Favours and for the Fellow-feeling they have discovered for my very poor and much oppressed countrymen; these Acts of Kindness and Hospitality have filled me with a longing desire to see these worthy Friends on my own Estate in Africa, when the richest Produce of it should be devoted to their Entertainment; they should there partake of the luxuriant Pine-apples and the well-flavoured virgin Palm Wine, and to heighten the Bliss, I would burn a certain kind of Tree, that would afford us a Light as clear and brilliant as the Virtues of my Guests.

I am Sir, your humble Servant,

GUSTAVUS VASA, the African.

The attention of Parliament was directed to this great evil, and some extraordinary debates took place on the Slave Trade in the House of Commons. It was expected that the discussions would be resumed early in the session, 1791, and the opponents of the shameful traffic in

Birmingham prepared to co-operate with their Friends in Parliament. A meeting was held for this purpose in November, of which we have the following brief report :—

ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

Birmingham Hotel, November, 1790.—At a Meeting of the Committee, held here this Day, it appeared that the great Question respecting the abolition of the Slave Trade was likely to come before Parliament early in the ensuing Sessions ; and that in Addition to the Expenses already incurred (Accounts of which have appeared in the London and Birmingham Papers) considerable sums would still be wanting to defray the Charges attending the Examination of Witnesses, and many other Contingencies : It was therefore thought proper to open another Subscription in this Town and Neighbourhood, in Support of the Abolition ; a Cause which is so very interesting to our Feelings as Men, and to our Principles as Christians.

Subscriptions will be received by Taylor and Lloyds, Bankers, in Birmingham ; and we hope this Intimation will render a personal application unnecessary.

Charles Curtis	E. Burn	William Russell
Spencer Madan	Charles Lloyd	Francis Perrott
Joseph Priestley	Samuel Garbett	William Villers

On the 4th of February, 1790, Mr. Wilberforce carried a motion in the House of Commons for appointing a committee to examine further witnesses on behalf of the abolition of the Slave Trade. A large number of witnesses were examined, and on the 18th of April, 1791, he introduced his motion for its abolition. There was a long and rather fierce discussion, and although the motion was supported by Pitt, Fox, Burke, Grey, Windham, Sheridan, in fact by almost all the statesmen in the house, it was lost on the division by a majority of seventy-five votes, the numbers being, for Mr. Wilberforce's motion, eighty-eight, against one hundred and sixty-three. Nothing daunted by this defeat, the friends of the slave continued their work with renewed energy. Thousands of people resolved to abstain from using West India sugar and rum. On the 4th of July another meeting was held in Birmingham, of which the following is the report :—

Birmingham Hotel, July 4, 1791.—At a respectable General Meeting of Subscribers to promote the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Mr. Villers, in the Chair,

Resolved,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be presented to the Committee in London (and it is our unanimous opinion that the Thanks of the Nation are also due to them) for their unremitted Attention to the glorious Cause in which they are engaged ; and that this meeting will most heartily co-operate with them in their further Endeavours to bring about an Event, wherein the Justice, Honour, and, we scruple not to say, the Interest of the Nation are involved, being fully persuaded that as Justice is perverted, and Honour is lost, so every real Advantage must be destroyed by a Traffic in the Blood of men.

Resolved,—That the Thank of this Meeting be also respectfully given to William Wilberforce, Esq., for the unwearied Zeal he has manifested in his Endeavours to wipe off the Stain brought on the Character of the Nation by so inhuman a Traffic, and to the Right Hon. W. Pitt, the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, M. Montague, and W. Smith, Esqrs., as well as to all the other Members of the House of Commons, who united with them on that important Question ; testifying, at the same time, the high Esteem and Respect we cannot but entertain for all who nobly resolve never to desist from appealing to the Consciences of their Countrymen till that detestable Commerce be entirely abolished.

Resolved,—That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Rev. C. Curtis, the Rev. S. Madan, the Rev. Dr. Priestley, the Rev. J. Riland, W. Russell, Esq. S. Garbett, Esq., Fran. Parrot, M.D., and Mr. Charles Lloyd (the Committee appointed at a former Meeting) for their Attention to this Business ; and that they, together with the Rev. Thomas Price, E. Palmer, Esq., C. Capper, Esq., and Mr. Villers, be a Committee for carrying into effect the Resolutions of the Meeting.

Resolved,—That these Resolutions signed by the Chairman be published in the Birmingham and such of the London Papers as the Committee judge proper.

W. VILLERS.

Two more years of agitation, lectures, meetings, and discussions followed. Innumerable pamphlets were published on the horrors of the Slave Trade, and volume succeeded volume in support of its abolition. Early in the session of 1794 Mr. Wilberforce obtained leave to bring in his bill again, which this time passed the House of Commons, but was rejected in the Lords. For thirteen years longer was this horrible traffic allowed to continue. For a time, vested interests were more potent than the voice of humanity and the claims of the Christian Religion, but in the end the latter prevailed, as they have ever yet done, and will do, to the end of time. In 1807 the bill for the abolition of this iniquitous traffic passed both Houses, and received the Royal assent. By this bill it was enacted “that no vessel should clear out for slaves from any port within the British dominions after the first of May, 1807, and that no slave should be landed in the colonies after the first of March, 1808.”* The closing act of this great triumph of civilisation over barbarism must be told in the words of its historian, whose own untiring energy, unconquerable zeal, and indefatigable labours did so much towards the attainment of the victory. “But though,” says Clarkson, “the bill had now passed both Houses, there was an awful fear throughout the kingdom lest it should not receive the royal assent before the ministry was dissolved.

* Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. v. 2. p. 376.

This event took place the next day, for on Wednesday, the twenty-fifth (of March), at half-past eleven in the morning, His Majesty's message was delivered to the different members of it, that they were then to wait upon him to deliver up the seals of their offices. It then appeared that a commission for the royal assent to this bill, among others, had been obtained. This commission was instantly opened by the Lord Chancellor (Erskine), who was accompanied by the Lords Holland and Auckland, and, as the clock struck twelve, just when the sun was in its meridian splendour to witness this august Act, this establishment of a Magna Charta for Africa in Britain, and to sanction it by its most vivid and glorious beams, it was completed. The ceremony being over, the seals of the respective offices were delivered up, so that the execution of this commission was the last act of the administration of Lord Grenville, an administration which, on account of its virtuous exertions in behalf of the oppressed African race, will pass to posterity, living through successive generations, in the love and gratitude of the most virtuous of mankind.

"Thus ended one of the most glorious contests, after a continuance of twenty years, of any ever carried on in any age or country. A contest, not of brutal violence, but of reason. A contest between those who felt deeply for the happiness and the horrors of their fellow-creatures, and those who, through vicious custom and the impulse of avarice, had trampled under foot the sacred rights of their nature, and had even attempted to efface all title to the divine image from their minds."*

Birmingham people may look back with pride upon the part which the town took in obtaining this "august Act."

THE RATING OF SMALL TENEMENTS.

In Woodfall's Diary, under the date October 28, 1790, we read that "The number of houses in Birmingham is computed at nearly 13,000, three-fourths of which are under £10 a year, consequently not liable to the payment of poor-rates. The inhabitants, therefore, mean to apply

* Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. b. 2. pp. 579-81.

to Parliament for an Act to make houses rateable in the following proportions : 6d. in the £ for houses of £8 and upwards ; 4d. on those from £6 to £7 19s. ; and 3d. on all under £6." This attempt to rate small houses produced one of the sharpest parochial agitations that we have yet had to record. All the owners of this class of property, with William Hutton, the historian, at their head, offered an uncompromising opposition to the proposed bill. The battle was begun on October 4, when the following advertisement was published :—

Birmingham, September 27, 1790.—The Poor's Rates in this Parish having of late increased in a very alarming Degree, and having become extremely burdensome to the middle Class of Inhabitants, which is, in a great measure, occasioned by the immense Number of small Houses that have been built within the last thirty years, and which, being let under Ten Pounds per Year, pay nothing to the Rates: the Occupiers of such Houses being chiefly very poor persons with large Families, who come into the Town from other Parishes in the Neighbourhood, and would, if they were made Parishioners here, by having Levies collected from them, become much more expensive to the Parish than such increased Levy would be adequate to ; the Overseers of the Poor have taken the opinion of the principal Inhabitants individually on the proposed Measure of Obliging the Proprietors of Houses, under Ten Pounds per year, to pay some Rate to the Poor for those Houses, as the same is done in the Parish of St. Luke in London ; and finding they are almost unanimously of Opinion that an Act of Parliament should be solicited for that Purpose, have therefore requested the Assistance of some of the principal Payers to the Parish Rates, to propose a Plan and appoint a Day for a general Meeting of Inhabitants on that business only ; who having maturely considered the magnitude of the Evil, and being fully satisfied that no other Remedy will be sufficient, desire a general meeting of all such Inhabitants as pay to the Parish Rates, at the great room at the Hotel, on Wednesday, the 20th of October, at Ten o'Clock in the Morning, to determine on the following question, viz. :—

" Shall Application be made, in the next Session of Parliament, for leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings, to pay Parish Rates for those Houses, &c."

And if this question is carried in the Affirmative, to appoint a Committee for the management of the Business.

By Order, THOMAS HARRISON, Vestry Clerk.

N.B. It is judged necessary to state, that out of 8,000 Houses built within the last thirty years, not more than 1,300 pay the Parish Rates.

Hutton was not long in taking up arms. In the next number of the *Gazette*, October 11, the following clear and emphatic declaration of war appeared from his pen. None of his letters upon this subject have been reprinted in the collected edition of his works. They are full of local interest, as well as illustrative of the character of our historian.

It will be remembered with regret that he also opposed the Act for "Enlightening and Cleansing the Streets;" and from the same selfish motives:—

The RATES upon small Houses considered.

October 11, 1790.—THE Question before the Town is, "That as the Poor's Expense is enormous, and, as there are 12,000 houses in Birmingham, and only 3,000 which pay levies, whether the landlord, whose profits are prodigious, ought to be saddled by Act of Parliament with the levies of the remaining nine." Instead of pronouncing hastily upon this important point it merits a candid examination. We all know, if a certain sum must be raised, a man had rather it came out of his neighbours' pocket than his own; consequently, he who is not a landlord of small houses is willing to throw the burden on him who is; hence the majority will carry the question, just or unjust.

Such a scheme would be *impolitic*. No town in Britain has equalled Birmingham in the rapidity of its growth. This is owing to the increase of its manufactories, for they will ever rise and fall together; both originate from the commercial spirit of the inhabitants. Whatever, therefore, tends to damp this rising flame will be found, in the end, destructive.

The amazing increase of trade and of houses are not so much owing to the natives as to aliens, who are by far the greater number. If the stranger, then, is necessary for the support of these it would be *impolitic* to exclude him. Every person who is to subsist by industry has a certain portion of labour to sell. There are thousands of places, within fifty miles round us, where such persons hawk this valuable commodity, but cannot procure a purchaser. Birmingham is a market everlastingly open for this kind of traffic, and the more free the market, the more it will abound with customers; hence the article is purchased at an easy rate. This is the support of our commerce. Apprentices make but a small part of our laborious hands. The desolate wanderer, the disbanded soldier, the broken tradesman, the discarded livery-man, the people of either sex and of every description, without money and without employment, find both in the shops. Here they become articulated for a few years, at six, seven or eight shillings a week, while learning a trade. Here they establish themselves and their families; and the master, by purchasing their labour cheap, is enabled to carry the produce to a ready market. We ought rather to receive such with open arms than shut our doors against them. Although this ingress of people fills the town with paupers, which become a heavy burden upon the inhabitants, yet the profits of their labour, in the aggregate, is infinitely an over balance. As it is our interest to receive them, so it is equally our interest to furnish them with accommodations, therefore small houses are necessary; and instead of mulcting the man who ventures his fortune upon so slender a basis, he merits the thanks of his neighbours.

If a burden be unwillingly fastened to a man's back, he will use every means in his power to throw it off. The landlord, if oppressed by this barbarous tax, will try to throw it upon the tenants; this by augmenting the rent will tend to prohibit the approach of the stranger, and the stagnation of building will follow. Should the laborious inhabitants be discouraged, they will fly to the neighbouring parishes where there is no such burden, and carry with them the manufactures, to the prejudice of Birmingham, for the work and the workmen will ever go together.

Besides, if a partial tax is laid upon one description of men only, it is doubtful whether they will not retaliate the ill treatment by filling the workhouse in weeding out the refuse of their tenants. No evil can arise from the great increase of buildings, except to the builder, for the greater the number, the greater the plenty, and the cheaper they will be set, which becomes an invitation to the alien.

Such an imposition is *cruel*, for houses being less sought after, will be reduced in value, and often remain upon the owner's hands, who, instead of receiving rent, must pay levies; and nothing will make a person value an estate less than when he is obliged to pay for keeping it; nor anything sooner make *him* a pauper than to pay, without receiving, to maintain paupers. It will also sink that land which waits to be set upon building leases. If a man is burthened with what he *has* he will not be solicitous for more; thus it becomes prejudicial to the neighbouring estates. It is *unjust*. Neither law nor equity can charge one man with the concerns of another. Each must stand independent. A poor's levy is a debt due from an inhabitant to the parish in which a third person has no concern. The overseer has a right to collect it of that inhabitant, but not of any one else, and common justice directs that no wanton exercise of arbitrary power shall invade private right.

Such an act must be *indeterminate*. There will be avenues through which finesse can creep, against which the utmost sagacity of St. Steven's, or even that of a crowded vestry, are unable to guard; hence will arise disputes, animosities, ill neighbourhood, and law-suits, to which all the profits may be inadequate. No partial tax can sit easy.

How well the landlords' profit will bear the burden has not yet been proved. They can best solve this question who count it. In some instances, I am well-informed, it does not exceed 5 per cent., in others the trouble exceeds the profit! As I am possessed of only fourteen pounds a year of this moonshine property, mine is upon too small a scale to decide; nor is the whole worth a contention. Perhaps, from the loss of rent, empty houses, and repairs, I lose about half. But whatever be these monstrous profits, which injustice marks out for plunder and envy longs to devour, they are the proprietor's *own*, and, as private property, they are sacred. It is a dangerous doctrine to take a man's money because he is rich. It is objected "that the landlord makes fifteen per cent. of his capital." Let me ask the objector, whether he would not make fifteen of his? Besides, if the trade is so extremely lucrative, it is open for himself.

An additional tax is *unnecessary*. The money already collected, properly applied, will more than cover every exigency. If a man, with an ample income, cannot make both ends meet, whether is it more prudent to supply him with as much as he can squander, or regulate his expenses? I have not the least animosity to any of the overseers, nay so far from bearing them disrespect, I do not so much as know any one of them except Mr. Lewin, from his repeatedly calling for the Levies, and him I think as harmless, as a dove; nothing personal, therefore can be drawn from the premises.

The greatest evil that ever afflicted Birmingham, was that of constituting *twelve* overseers. That enormous number can no more conduct the business, than twelve pilots, at twelve helms, can a vessel. Six did mischief, but twelve increases it, like that number multiplied into itself. Should anyone doubt the assertion, let him compare the last seven years with the seven preceding. A large number of men may be beneficial in a performance of manual labour, but as the overseers neither work with the spade nor the hatchet, their number is not only useless, but detrimental. This business is chiefly conducted by the *head*, in which case the number cannot be too small; but however small the necessary article, it has long been wanting.

The town, groaning under the accumulated load of levies, sought relief, in 1788, by putting the labouring poor under the care of Mr. Robinson at a stipulated price, and Mr. Jukes promised his kind assistance in conducting the receipts and disbursements. The bargain was compleated, and a fair prospect opened of saving the town *four thousand pounds a year*, and the poor being equally supported. But this bright illumination, like a flash of lightning, instantly vanished, and left behind it a palpable darkness.* Astonished at the sudden alteration, I enquired the reason from one of the then overseers, who replied, "Mr. Robinson would get too much money." In conversing with another of the Lichfield-street Jury, half-tipsy, he told me, "that no man would be suffered to transact parochial business who did not believe in the Trinity," and asked my opinion of that long-disputed point. Unable to withhold a smile, I remarked as religion had long ceased to meddle in the vestry, it would be absurd to refer the Question to a perfect stranger; that when I turned Catholic and he turned P'riest, I would make my confession. The real motive still lay hid, but under so flimsy a covering that the dimmest eye might see it. "If we adhere to the Agreement," says one officer to another, "we shall be reduced to servants. We may collect the levies, but not be suffered to finger them. Our authority and our consequence will vanish together; and we, like the guardians, shall be reduced to cyphers. While we hold the purse, we hold the power; we will part with neither."

It was now as necessary to throw out an empty bubble to amuse the public, as an empty cask to the whale. The fabrication of shanks, toys, shirts, quilts, &c., were solicited of the inhabitants, and established as a manufactory in the Workhouse, which was to perform wonders. But, that the foundation of this promising fabric was rotten, and the component parts bundled together with a rope of sand, the increase of the levies sufficiently testified. The profits were like those of the race-horse who won fifty. but cost sixty to keep him. This phantom expiring, the rate upon small houses is now issued forth, which, like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, is to din the ear and stifle complaint; or, like charity, is to cover a multitude of sins; or a Betty Canning tale to amuse the world and hide the errors of Government; or a sop to silence the many-headed Cerberus, while the benighted officers are ferried out of danger. Thus pride, the spring of action, destroyed a most beneficial system, cherished the blunders of the vestry, and the public are choused out of several thousands a year.

September 30, 1790.

W. HUTTON.

The proposal met with another opponent in J. G. (John Green), who thus temperately states the case:—

October 18, 1790.—"Shall Application be made the next Session of Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings, to pay the Parish Rates for those Houses, &c., &c."

To the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

GENTLEMEN,—The period is nearly arrived when this proposition will become the subject of your collective deliberation. Its having occupied so generally the Attention of the Town, is a proof of its being considered of *importance*, consequently demanding a careful investigation.

To form a *right* judgment, it will be proper to consider, first, whether *any* alteration respecting the Parish Rates in Birmingham is *necessary*, and, *if* necessary, whether that proposed is consistent, on the one hand, with strict justice (as it applies to the individuals

it is likely to affect), and whether, on the other hand, it is compatible with the *real* advantage of the town. On each of these points much might be advanced. My design at present is only to contend that the proposed application is not *necessary*, reserving for the future those arguments that might be adduced in proof of its injustice and impolicy.

Far be it from me to arrogate to myself any depth of *legal* knowledge, or to speak on topics of *that* kind with a confidence suited only to gentlemen who rank in that learned profession. Yet, Sirs, so fully am I persuaded that their judgment would deem the laws *as they now stand* sufficient, that I make with pleasure an appeal to them.

That a general conviction, however, on this head may take place, it will be necessary to be furnished with a variety of information and facts; but as the investigation of those facts cannot possibly take place in a popular assembly, and as it is *indispensably* necessary such investigation should precede any decision on the question now depending, I submit to you, Sirs, whether it will not be strictly proper to move, immediately on the opening of the Business at the Town's meeting, that a committee be appointed of fifteen respectable inhabitants, including in that number five of the parties whose property would be affected by the proposed alteration, the auditors of the accounts, and the rest of other respectable inhabitants.

That such committee be requested to inspect the Overseers' accounts, and to point out whether any, and what, material part of the expences stated in those disbursements, might be avoided or lessened; and whether by any better mode of assessing, or more diligent attention in collecting the rates *now* demandable, the annual receipts might not be considerably enlarged, That the said committee do also enquire into the usual mode of purchasing provisions, and all other articles, particularly whether in any, and in what instances, it has been the practice of any, and what overseers, during the time of their being such, to act as *buyers* for the *poor*, and as *sellers* at the same time of articles *furnished by themselves*. And further, that it be recommended to the said committee to particularly examine whether some and what proposal, was not made by Mr. Jukes for the purpose of saving a considerable yearly sum to this town, and to learn the reason for such proposal being rejected.

Finally, that the said committee be requested, as soon after having obtained the information required as is practicable, to call a general meeting of the town, and report the same at such meeting.

This mode of proceeding is so invariably adopted in all similar cases, is in itself so equitable, and so extremely *necessary* that it would be doubting the understanding and insulting the justice of the town, to add a single argument to that which so particularly enforces itself.

I am, &c., J. G.

The "Betty Canning" of Hutton's letter was not slow to respond to that gentleman's attack, and in her reply she says some rather hard things of our old friend:—

October 18, 1790.—Friend Hutton, THE Parish of Birmingham is much indebted to thee for thy quaint conceits, droll observations, whimsical similitudes, and the witty old sayings of SOLOMON,* inserted in the newspapers of last week. The present, as well as all former overseers of the poor, cannot but thank thee for thy modest and friendly comments on their parochial management.

* In the Farce called "The Quaker."

The public have much to expect from a person of thy high character, eminence, *liberality*, and experience, in taking up the gauntlet. Already hast thou acted as perpetual high chancellor of the court of tender conscience, one of the honourable commissioners of lamps and scavengers, twice overseer of the poor, and high president of the kirk, F.A.S., all which offices thou didst fill with a dignity peculiar to thyself. If the intended scheme of incorporating this town should take place, we may presage the happy prospect of seeing thee any thy worthy friend fill the magisterial chair, surrounded by the guard with ragged pikes, and the imperial arms of Birmingham on thy carriage of state. Then, no doubt, all the enormities thou and he complains of will be rectified. What a pity that the management and direction of all the public concerns are not vested in the hands of two such SOLOMONS.

But "Pride, the spring of actions, destroys the most beneficial systems," totally preventing thee and thy worthy friend from fingering twelve thousand pounds of the town's cash. I thought thee and thy worthy friend were more sagacious philosophers than to suffer the town to see your uneasiness at your disappointment. Have patience, friend William, and all these things may be added unto thee.

I think thou intimates something in thy letter about turning catholic priest: prithee don't: that appearance won't suit thee; a jew rabbi would be more in character for thee. I wish to remind thee of the fable of the Ass in the Lion's skin, who, by his braying and terrible appearance, attempted to alarm the forest, but on close inspection was found to be nothing but an Ass, and derided accordingly.

I have much to say to thee, but as thou art a rigid economist, may be thou wilt blame me for wasting so much time on thy account. I shall, therefore, for the present, content myself with the hope of seeing thee at the Town's Meeting on Wednesday next, when I propose telling thee more of my mind. Till then, farewell, I remain thy old friend,

(I should sign BETTY CANNING, but am) A. B.

On the same day the proprietors of houses under ten pounds a year, who were desirous of "protecting their property against the attacks of the overseers" were invited to meet at the Shakespeare Tavern. A public meeting was held at the hotel on the 20th, at which a paper containing the case of the overseers was presented. It is a very important document, and gives us a great deal of information on the condition of the town at that time. It will be seen that it was resolved to make the application to Parliament. The meeting is described as the most numerous ever witnessed in the town. The debate lasted upwards of two hours, and the resolutions were passed by a great majority.

Birmingham, October 20, 1790.—At a most numerous and respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town, held this Day, at the Hotel, agreeable to public Advertisements,

Mr. VILLERS in the Chair,

A Paper (whereof the following is a Copy) having been prepared by the Overseers and the Gentlemen whom they consulted on the Business, and put into the hands of the Chairman, the same was read by him, viz. :—

“The present Meeting having been convened to determine whether an Application shall be made to Parliament at the ensuing Sessions for Leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings, to pay the Parish Rates for the same; the following facts, with the Observations and Arguments in support of the Measure grounded thereon, are submitted to Consideration.

The Facts themselves, it is presumed, will not be controverted. Namely,

1st. That the Parish Rates have lately increased in an alarming Degree, and are now become extremely burthensome; the Rates for the Relief of the Poor only amounting annually to the sum of 13,000*l.* and upwards.

2nd. That the Rates, under the present System, are very unequally assessed, three Parts in four of the Houses of which the Town consists, and which are calculated to amount to 12,000 in the whole, not being at all rated; so that the whole Burthen falls upon, and is borne by, the Occupiers of the remaining fourth Part, which Burthen lies very heavy on those who rent Houses between 10*l.* and 20*l.* per Year, who have many of them great Difficulty, with all their Industry and Economy, to support themselves and their families under it.

If these Premises are admitted, it seems expedient that some Method should be adopted to relieve the Inhabitants that are now rated from their present oppressive Payments; and it is submitted that nothing can so effectually answer this Purpose as the Scheme, now under Consideration, of obliging the Proprietors of small Houses and other Buildings, under the annual Rent of 10*l.*, to pay the Rates for the same, by which Means the whole Property will be (as it ought) rated equally, according to its Value, without an Increase to the Number of the Poor, which must be the Consequence of rating and receiving from the Occupiers; and though it may at first Sight appear a little inequitable that the Landlord should pay a rate, which by the general Law is fixed upon the Tenant, yet, upon an Investigation, it will appear that the Proprietors of unrated Property will have no real cause of Complaint, and that, instead of opposing, it will be their Interest to join with their Fellow-townsmen in the intended Application to Parliament; for it appears to be a Fact not disputed, that many Proprietors of small Houses set them at higher Rents because they are not rated, so that the Occupiers thereof, virtually and in Effect, contribute towards the Rates, though the same goes (instead of benefitting and increasing the Fund for the Maintenance of the Poor) wholly into the Pocket of the Landlord. If, therefore, such Proprietors are compelled to pay the Rates, it surely is no more than an Act of Justice and Propriety; and with Respect to the smaller Houses which are not set at such advanced Rents, a Remedy will be always in the Hands of the respective Proprietors, who may raise the Rents in Proportion to such Rates.

Although the Overseers, willing to make the statement in the Advertisement rather under than over the mark, compute the unassessed Houses at 9,000, it appears from a

more strict investigation that there are 10,000, and that they are partly in the following proportions, viz. :

		£	£	s.	d.	
500	from	9	to	9	19	0 per year.
500	"	8	"	8	19	0 "
2,000	"	7	"	7	19	0 "
3,000	"	6	"	6	19	0 "
2,000	"	5	"	5	19	0 "
2,000	under and up to	4		4	19	0 "
<hr/>						
10,000						

If, therefore, a Levy of 6d. in the Pound on such Houses as pay 8*l.* per year and upwards ; of 4d. on such as pay from 6*l.* to 7*l.* 19*s.* per year ; and of 3d. on all under 6*l.* per year, was collected from those 10,000 Houses, which do not now pay, each Levy from them would amount to 970*l.* and upwards, being very near as much as is produced from one of the present Levies ; so, on this calculation, the present payers would be relieved from nearly, if not quite, one half of their present Burthen ; an argument surely of great Weight, and such as should induce the Proprietors of small Houses to consider that they themselves will be thus materially relieved by the Plan proposed. But if the proposed scheme should not take effect, there seems to be no alternative save that of removing all such Persons as are likely to become burthensome ; and then bringing forward a general Rate or Assessment of Houses and Buildings of every Description throughout the Parish ; and the Gentlemen who are Proprietors of small Houses, and who, from apparently interested motives, may be inclined to oppose the present Plan, will do well to consider how in that case the Town in general, and themselves as Individuals, will be affected. In the first Place, it must operate in Reduction of the Rents of unrated Houses and Buildings, most of which are being now set at higher Rents because they are, at present, exempt from the Payment of Rates, must, it is presumed, when rated, sink in their Rents in Proportion, or nearly to the Amount of the Rates which shall be laid upon them. In the next Place, it will necessarily add a great Increase to the Number of Poor, after every endeavour is made by Removal to prevent it, who will become settled in the Parish by Payment of Rates (an evil, which in the proposed Plan, will be avoided) and the additional Expences of such increased Poor (to which the Proprietors of small unrated Houses who are resident in Birmingham, and who constitute by far the greater part of such Proprietors, will be obliged to bear their part) will be productive of more Disadvantage to such Proprietors, by an increased Assessment upon the Property they now occupy and pay the Rates for, than they can experience by acquiescing in the proposed plan, as they will suffer every Inconvenience and Loss which the plan proposed can bring upon them (without reaping the Advantages which it is calculated to produce to them) as well as the additional Loss occasioned by Removal of their Tenants, and by many of their Houses being unoccupied.

If it should be suggested that the Scheme now in Contemplation savours of Hardship to the Occupiers of the smaller Houses, in depriving them of the Means of obtaining a Settlement by Payment of Rates, though they will in fact contribute thereto by an Increase in their Rents ; it is submitted that this is not an Object of present discussion. This will be properly left to the Wisdom and Justice of the Legislature, which will protect the Rights of Individuals as far as is fitting and expedient. It may, however, be hoped

that the extensive Manufactures and Commerce of the Town of Birmingham will lay a particular Claim, under the present circumstances to the Protection and Indulgence of the Legislature more than a Place of less consequence hath a right to expect. As to other Parishes, it is presumed, they can have no Cause of Complaint, because Birmingham employs in its Manufactures a great Number of their Poor, which cannot find Employment at Home ; many of whom, as well as their Children, gain Settlements there, whilst very few of the Inhabitants of Birmingham leave their Situations to gain Settlements in other Parishes.

It may upon the whole be concluded, that the Scheme now under consideration will be attended with great advantages to the Town in general, with little, or perhaps no Loss to the proprietors of the present small unrated Houses, and will be no real Hardship to the Occupiers of such small Houses. It is, therefore, hoped that Persons possessed of such Property will meet the wishes of the other Inhabitants, and, instead of opposing, unanimously concur with them in the intended Application to Parliament, or (to avoid that Expende), that they will voluntarily agree to pay the Rates in question (either in the Proportions above stated, or such as shall appear most equitable to a Committee which may be appointed for that Purpose), as the Inhabitants of Liverpool, Leeds, and Manchester, under similar circumstances have lately done, and still continue to do."

Whereupon the following resolutions were passed by a great majority, viz. :—

Resolved 1,—That Application be made the next Sessions of Parliament, for Leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings, to pay Parish Rates for those Houses.

Resolved 2,—That Joseph Carles, Esq., the Rev. Dr. Spencer, Matthew Boulton, Esq., Henry Clay, Esq., Messrs. S. Galton, Junr., Charles Lloyd, W. Wallis Mason, R. Conquest, W. Hunt, Joseph Guest, James Alstone, Joseph Gibbs, B. S. Heaton, Richard Jephcoate, S. Ryland, Thomas Robinson, Benjamin Parker, and W. Villers, together with the present Overseers, and the six who are just gone out of Office, be a Committee for the Conduct of this Business.

Resolved 3,—That the Inhabitants of the Town who have any Observations to make on the Business, be requested to communicate from Time to Time such remarks as may appear to them of Importance, in writing, to the Committee, that such a Bill may be drawn up as shall meet the Sense of the majority of the Inhabitants.

Resolved 4,—That the Resolutions of this Meeting, together with the arguments, &c., read by the Chairman, be published in the Birmingham Newspaper.

Resolved 5,—That the Thanks of the Meeting be given to the Overseers, for bringing the matter forward.

Resolved unanimously,—That the Thanks of the Meeting be given to the Chairman, for his manly, liberal, and impartial conduct.

No day having been fixed upon for the first meeting of the Committee, the Chairman thinks it a duty incumbent on him to appoint one for that Purpose ; he therefore requests the Gentlemen named therein, to meet at the Public Office in Dale End, on Wednesday next, at Eleven o'Clock in the Morning.

W. VILLERS, Chairman.

The following is a report of a meeting of the opposition :—

Shakespeare Tavern, New-street, Birmingham, Oct. 27, 1790.—At a Meeting of the Proprietors of Houses in Birmingham, of less than £10 per Annum Rent, and others, held in this Place, for the Purpose of taking into consideration an Application intended to be made by the Overseers of the Poor of Birmingham and others, the next Sessions of Parliament, for Leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings in Birmingham, to pay Parish Rates for the same, pursuant to the Resolutions of a Meeting of Inhabitants of Birmingham, held at the Hotel, on the 20th inst., and a circular Letter from the Vestry Clerk having been read, and which was as follows :

COPY.

„Birmingham, Oct. 16, 1790.

“Sir,—You are particularly requested to attended the General Town's Meeting, at the Hotel, on Wednesday Morning next, the 20th inst., at Ten o'clock precisely, in order to *support* the Measure proposed of *obliging* the Proprietors of small Houses to pay Levies for such Houses.

Signed,

“T. HARRISON, Vestry Clerk.”

And the Proceedings of the said Meeting at the Hotel, as published in Aris's Birmingham Gazette of Monday last, being also read ;

It was Resolved, I.—That the said Meeting at the Hotel was not a fair and impartial Meeting, inasmuch as the Vestry Clerk's Letter is a particular invitation to those Persons who were known to be desirous of supporting the Measures previously adopted, and brought forward at said Meeting, without others having any Knowledge or Intimation of such Invitation.

Resolved, II.—That the Paper read by Mr. Villers, the Chairman of said Meeting, at the Hotel, and the “Facts, with the Observations and Arguments in support of the Measure grounded thereon,” as stated in said Paper, contain a very fallacious Statement of the Business which ought to have been agitated at said Meeting, but the doing of which was prevented by the Rapidity with which the Chairman put the first Question after he had read said Paper.

Resolved, III.—That it would be unjust to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses to pay Poor's Rates for their Tenants of such Houses, as thereby every Occupier of such Houses who is of Ability to pay Poor's Levies would be obliged to pay it through the Hands of his Landlord, without having that Benefit thereby which, by the common Rights of Man, the dictates of Humanity and Justice, and by the present existing Laws of his Country, he ought, namely, gaining a Settlement in the Parish.

Resolved, IV.—That the General Laws being properly inforced with Candour and Liberality are adequate and sufficient for every Purpose.

Resolved, V.—That the Threats thrown out respecting the removal of out Parishoners are cruel and illiberal, as we have their Labours without the Risque of their becoming Burthensome to the Parish, and that the Labours of the lower Order of the People is the Wealth of the Town.

Resolved, VI.—That this Meeting doth protest against any Part of the Expences being paid out of the Public Levies, that may be occasioned by an application to Parliament by the Overseers and their Party, to oblige the Landlords or Owners of small Houses to pay Parish Rates for such Houses.

Resolved, VII.—That the Motion offered by Mr. Green, at the said Meeting ought to have been received with Thanks ; which Motion was in the following words, viz.—“ That a Committee be appointed of fifteen respectable Inhabitants, including in that Number five of the Parties whose Property would be affected by the proposed Alteration, the Auditors of Accounts, and the rest of other respectable Inhabitants. That such Committee be requested to inspect the Overseers’ Accounts, and to point out whether any, and what material Part of the Expenses stated in those Disbursements might be avoided or lessened, and whether by any better mode of assessing, or more diligent Attention in collecting the Rates *now* demandable, the Annual Receipts might not be considerably enlarged. That the said Committee also enquire into the usual mode of Purchasing Provisions and all other Articles ; particularly, whether in any, and what, instances, it has been the Practice of any, and of what, Overseers, during the Term of their being such, to act as *Buyers* for the *Poor* and as sellers at the same Time, of articles furnished by themselves.”

Resolved, VIII.—That a sum of money be raised by voluntary Subscription of the Proprietors of such Houses and Buildings as are the Objects of the intended Act of Parliament, and of such others as chuse to subscribe, to defray the Expences of opposing the intended Application for the same Act, and that the money raised by such Subscription be deposited with Messrs. Goodall, Dickenson, and Co., Bankers, in Birmingham, to be received from them at such Times and in such Manner as a Committee for conducting this Undertaking shall direct.

BENJAMIN PARKER, Solicitor for the Subscribers.

As Hutton was the principal opponent of the proposed bill, and as he was, doubtless, the most noted man engaged in this controversy, he came in for a full share of the assaults for which this brief but sharp controversy was famous. The next letter addressed to him is a specimen of the “playful banter” of the time :—

November 8, 1790.—To William Hutton.—Bravo ! Friend Hutton, Bravo ! A second Daniel absolutely ! What an ingenious and learned man thou art ? The Public seemed quite satisfied with what thou hadst written before ; but I declare thy last publication in Friend Swinney’s Paper, if possible, outdoes all thy former out doings ; such refined Sentiments, strong Reasonings, elegant Language, modest Opinions, and loving Conclusion, cannot fail to make an indelible Impression on all who read it. Thy Candour is eminently conspicuous. Thou sayest “ there exists an Error somewhere, and the Wisdom of Officers ought to find it out ;” the Overseers and the Public, perhaps, think they have, but thou confidently sayest No ; of course they are all in the wrong, and thy Wisdom, Friend Solomon, shines with more than meridian Splendour. That’s a droll Idea, too, about taxing empty Houses ; thou oughtest to say, O be joyful, &c., “ that empty Heads were not to be included.”

What a shocking Thing it was that such blind Error and gross Darkness overshadowed the Town’s Meeting last year, which rejected, by a majority of 50 to 8, thy Friend Jukes and Robinson’s Plan or Proposals for reducing the Levies to seven and under. The Scheme of those Worthies certainly demanded Notice, when a Saving of 5,000*l.* per annum was to be effected by the simple mode of G. Robinson’s paying One Shilling per Head for all Paupers he employed above 8 years old, and Six-pence for those under that

age. Some say that 100 or 120 were to be mustered in the House, others say 80 only capable of labour; suppose we say 100 at 1s. each per Head, which is 260*l.* per year, how thy Friend was to make out the remainder 4,740*l.* is to me a mystery, except Friend George has the supernatural gift of making seven Barley Loaves and two small Fishes serve the whole Family on the Sabbath Day, and the Fragments for the Remainder of the Week; but I suppose that's a Cabinet Secret. It is shrewdly suspected that the 10th Article of what is vulgarly called George Robinson's Proposals, is, in fact, what the Town is now about to adopt, viz., to assess all Buildings, and enforce Payment from all who do not receive, in order to reduce the Levies to Seven, so that the Employment of the Poor was only a cloak to conceal the Ways and Means of pocketing 500*l.* principal money, that was to be advanced, and 200*l.* per annum for nine years, exclusive of House Rent, Working Tools, Coals, and serving the House with Necessaries. Was't not thou, also, Friend William, in the Secret?

I don't always believe everything I hear; I ventured to consult the Town's Book for Knowledge, and I found that Friend Robinson, like the busy Bee, had largely participated of the public Flowers, his Receipts for Malt, Cheese, &c., for twelve months, was only 467*l.* 15s. 6d., so that it is no wonder he should wish to fly again to the Honey Combs; but I crave Pardon, if his motives arise from pure Disinterestedness, and the laudable desire to prevent others from imposing on the Town. It seemeth a fixed Principle with thee and thy Colleagues to endeavour to change the Meaning of all public Business, by wide Digressions and false Representations, by fixing gross Charges on the Conduct and Abilities of other Men, that your own actions may pass without Enquiry. Pray, may one be so bold as to ask, how thou and thy friends proposed managing, had the Town's Purse been put into your Possession? as thou sayest "No Workhouse, but pay all the Paupers out of the House." Now thy friends say, build a large Workhouse, take all the Paupers in—no Out Pay—make all work, Eyes or no Eyes, able or not able—no Work no Meat. This, I presume, is another Secret. Suffer me to advise thee and thy Friends to take the Beam out of your own Eyes, before ye presume to take the Mote out of others' Eyes. One Mend-fault is more respectable than twenty Find-faults. Writers who have penetrated into the deepest Recesses of the human Heart, by long Study and Observation on Men and Manners, say that the *Cacoethes Scribendi*,* is a Distemper in the human Frame, and curable only by that Treatment which Friend Proud knows so well how to administer to his Patients. Alexander Pope also sayeth, that

"Great Wits to Madness nearly are allied,
But thin Partitions do their Bounds divide."

But as thou art a *Rara Avis* in terra nigroque similluna Cygno, there will be no necessity to enlarge the Premises of Bilston, Henley, nor Moorfields, therefore thy Hint was needless. Fare thee well.

I remain thy old Friend,

TIMOTHEUS FAIRPLAY.

On the same day these two advertisements appeared:—

November 8, 1790.—The Committee, appointed by the Proprietors of Houses in Birmingham, under 10*l.* per annum, for conducting the Opposition to the intended Application to Parliament for an Act to oblige them to pay Poor's Rates for the same,

* Itch of Scribbling.

request the Attendance of all such Proprietors, and also of the Land Owners, or their Agents, and all other Persons as may be affected by such intended Act of Parliament, at the Shakespeare Tavern, on Friday, the 12th Day of November instant, at three o'clock in the Afternoon, on very particular Business.

November 8, 1790.—The Committee appointed to conduct the business of an Application to Parliament for Leave to bring in a Bill to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, &c., to pay the Parish Rates for the same, request the Inhabitants of the Town, who have any Observations to make on that Business, to communicate, from Time to Time, such Remarks as may appear to them of Importance, in writing, to the Committee, at the Public Office in Dale End; that such a Bill may be drawn up, as shall meet the Sense of the majority of the Inhabitants.

Birmingham, October 27, 1790.

W. VILLERS, Chairman.

Hutton was not the man to give in. He had pluck and ability, and he thus returns to the contest :—

The RATES upon small HOUSES in Birmingham considered.

November 4, 1790.—No subject within my knowledge, was ever supported by weaker arguments than this Tax upon Landlords. One gentleman told me yesterday, “The town was over built, and as there were a vast number of empty houses, they ought to be taxed.” For that very reason they ought not. Is not an empty house a sufficient tax upon the owner? “Enlarge the Workhouse, says another, and oblige all the dependents to come in, and then every evil will be cured.” And then, my good friend, the whole of Lichfield Street would be too small for a Workhouse; families in temporary sickness would be daily ruined, sold up, and brought into the house, when five shillings would have kept them out; daily murders would be committed by the stench of the crowd; disorder seen in perfection; those *out* would be unable to support those *in*. The keys of a thousand houses would be cast into the landlord’s hands, with the loss of rent and repairs, and then he might keep them. But I will instantly decline the thought, lest this paper, falling under the eye of the stranger, should induce him to think us a flock of Wild Geese; or the people of Bilston, Henley and Moorfields, take the hint and enlarge their premises. We might, however, pass on with time, tolerably well, without any alteration but in the measures of the Overseers.

While the inhabitants of Birmingham pay annually £3 to the poor for every £10 rent, and the inhabitants of other places pay but *one*, it proves there is an error somewhere. The wisdom of an officer ought to find that error out, and his prudence remove it. Her lands and her manufactures are in danger. No landlord act can cure the enormity.

The town approving a Plan formed with Mr. George Robinson, to reduce the evil, deputed a Committee, of which I was one, to carry it into execution. Could I, then, with serenity, behold the most beneficial scheme that ever appeared in favour of the place, consumed in the flame of Pride?

No undertaking can be effectively conducted by the Overseers: their situation will not allow it. Did Prudence ever guide a Mob? are they not a Vestry in Anarchy? a Jury without a foreman? a company of foot without a corporal? They find things in disorder, and leave them in worse. The *Ins* and the *Outs* succeed one another with such rapidity, that we cannot easily know them.

Six months after date we discharge half a dozen. Instead of the Overseers knowing how to conduct a plan, they have scarcely time to know each other. Every man, who knows anything of life, will agree, that an effort of consequence cannot be conducted except by a willing, able, and persevering hand. Can that hand be found in the above description? The people who settle amongst us are of that class who subsist by industry. None are more beneficial. Should a hundred of these approach us, and fill various departments, Would their landlords be the *only* gainers? Would not the profits of their labour be diffused through the manufacturer, the merchant, the taylor, baker, butcher, grocer, &c., &c.? Nay, even the chandler reaps a favour from the sale of a farthing candle. Thus the whole hundred receive a benefit from each other. Should it happen that ten of these become incapacitated, ought they to be forced as a burden upon a few individuals or the whole ninety bear a part? This proves it is a partial act. But partiality is one of its least injurious qualities. I have reason to think many thousands of small houses in town are under mortgage. What then becomes of the mortgagee? Who can justify breaking down the fence which guards his property, and exposing it to ravine? This proves it an unjust invasion of private right. Many of the inhabitants, in advanced life, wholly depend for subsistence upon a few small houses, and find it a troublesome and slender dependance. This pitiable class of people are in a dreadful situation; for if the act passes the tax will probably drive away their tenants; and if it does not, the Overseers threaten to drive them, and leave their houses empty.

This is a question of national magnitude, involving immense property. Every parish in the kingdom is concerned, and its consequences, I doubt not, will be seen by every member of the legislature. As no law of this kind exists, let me ask, Whether the House of Commons would introduce a dreadful precedent against themselves? for many of the members are proprietors of small houses, and would be liable to pay. For with what face or conscience could a member grant away another man's property and withhold his own? Others are Lords of Manors abounding with cottages and small tenements, over which the Overseer would instantly predominate. Others again have considerable interest in the Boroughs, and support their seats by letting their Burgess-tenures at easy rents. If I pursue this thought but one line farther we shall see *even* the Constitution itself totter. Let us not tear each other's vitals, by splitting into parties; nor spend £500 to be laughed at by the world. Let us restore that unanimity for which we have been famous. Relinquish the object, which, like the painted butterfly, is pursued with labour, and when caught is of no value. Let parochial economy preside, and let us equally contribute to the support of those objects by whose industry we grow rich.

I shall only declare in this public manner that no reflection was ever designed against any individual. There is not an inhabitant of Birmingham to whom I am an enemy; even the Overseers, as private men, I respect, but condemn their conduct as Officers.

WILLIAM HUTTON.

The Overseers, past and present, now came in a body, and challenged their opponents to a Town's Meeting :—

Vestry Room, Birmingham Workhouse, November 12, 1790.

TO WILLIAM HUTTON *and* JOSEPH JUKES.

In Consequence of those Letters lately inserted in the Birmingham Newspapers, under your Signatures, We, the undersigned, last six and the present twelve Overseers of the

Poor, think it an indispensable duty we owe to our Characters and the Parish at large, thus publicly to require you both to come openly before a TOWN'S MEETING to substantiate any censurable Charge or Charges you have brought, or have to bring, against our Parochial Conduct, in order FINALLY to relieve the Public from your *censorious* and *illiberal Insinuations* and *Aspersions*, as well as to have a public opportunity of defending our Conduct and Character, as Overseers, against the assassin-like attacks of such self-conceited, disappointed, and ambitious Calumniators, and likewise to preserve the future peace of the Parish.

We all request you will fix on an early Day, that we may call a general Town's Meeting, before whom it is our full determination to lay our Books and parochial conduct for their decision.

T. COOPER, High Street.

Thomas Cheston

William Leonard

John Clarke, Jun.

John Lander

William Bingley

Thomas Potts

Robert Butcher

William Lewin

John Cooke

William Sergeant

William Lea

Matthew Redfern

Edw. Barker

Thomas Mander

William Handasyd.

Humphrey Vale

Richard Brown

"A proprietor of small houses," comes forward as a peace-maker, and tries to throw oil on the troubled waters :—

To the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

November 15, 1790.—It would give us the sincerest pleasure, if we could be instrumental in removing those Differences which exist at this time in Birmingham, on Account of the proposed Plan of Augmenting the Poor's Rates, by subjecting the Landlords of the Houses under a Rent of £10 per annum to the payment of this Tax.

From a desire of preventing any Contest on this subject, and that Alienation of Mind which is the too frequent, if not the inseparable Companion of Controversy, we request the Attention of both Parties to the following Observations. And to begin with the Proprietors of small Houses under the Rent of £10 per annum, we recommend them to consider, that,

1. It is very unjust that the Occupiers of 3,000 houses should bear the whole Burden of the Poor's Rates, whilst 9,000 Houses, which are equally liable to be assessed in the same Ratio, pay nothing towards that Fund.

2. That the Overseers are only withheld from rating these Houses, from the Fear of increasing the Demand on the Fund for the Poor, a Fear, which (in the Estimation of several intelligent Persons who have considered the subject) has been suffered to operate too much.

3. That should the Expence of the Poor be doubled by this assessment (which is not at all probable), and if we admit that the amount of the Levies would be doubled by this means (which is very probable), this additional Incumbrance would not be felt by the present payers, and consequently it must be a very desirable circumstance for them to hazard an Experiment, by which they cannot lose, but by which they may eventually be much benefitted.

4. If the principal Inhabitants and Overseers should not succeed in the Application to Parliament (on which the Town has in a great measure already decided), it is most probable

(and, in the opinion of many respectable and intelligent Persons, exceedingly just and proper), that they will determine upon assessing *every House* whatever *in the same Ratio* as the present Assessment, compelling all to pay, relieving such as would be aggrieved by carrying this Resolution into effect, and removing such who were not Parishioners, and were ineligible to be made so.

Under these Considerations we appeal to you, whether it is prudent to oppose this Bill, which, should it succeed, will guard your Property from the *same Ratio* of Assessment with larger Houses; *at any rate*, we think, upon dispassionate Reflection, you will see the Propriety of proposing a Compromise.

And with respect to you, Gentlemen, who are desirous that an Act of Parliament should be solicited for the Purpose of assessing the Landlords, we submit to your Consideration, whether,

1. It will be eligible to preclude yourselves from assessing that Species of Property at the usual Ratio, which must for ever be the Case should an Act of Parliament be procured.

2. Whether, in order to heal Dissension and to prevent all future Animosity, it will not, upon the whole, be eligible to compromise this Business, especially as you proposed at the Town's Meeting, in the intended Bill to make such liberal concessions to the Proprietors of that species of Property.

3. Whether this Compromise, though it may not on the whole be so productive, yet as it will effectually secure you (as is the case in Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, and Leeds) from any increase in the number of the Poor, it may not on the whole be most advantageous; and

4. As the Expence of soliciting this Act will be certain, the Trouble considerable, and the Success Contingent, we think upon seriously reflecting upon these and other considerations which will occur, upon the whole it will be eligible for you to listen to liberal Terms of compromise.

We are very sensible that the Committee appointed by the Town must produce the outline of a Bill for the Approbation of the Inhabitants; but in the mean Time, should a fair Plan of compromise be offered to them, the Sense of the Town will be taken upon each of the Propositions, and the Compromise will most probably be adopted.

We earnestly recommend this suggestion to your serious and dispassionate attention, and are, with all due Respect,

A PROPRIETOR OF SMALL HOUSES,
AN INHABITANT.

The Overseers, "past and present," are thus addressed by an "unknown," on the subject of this protest and challenge of the 12th.

November 15, 1790.—To Messrs. Thomas Cooper, High Street, Thomas Cheston, Thomas Lander, Robert Butcher, William Serjeant, Edward Barker, Humphrey Vale, William Leonard, William Bingley, William Lewin, William Lea, Thomas Mander, Richard Brown, Bull Street, John Clarke, jun., Paradise Street, Thomas Potts, John Cook, Matthew Redfern, and William Handasyd, Overseers of the Poor of Birmingham, and also to William Villers their Chairman:

Gentlemen,—In your Advertisement addressed to the Inhabitants of the Town, you request those who may have any Observations to offer on the Business concerning your intended Application to Parliament, that they would communicate the same in writing; in consequence thereof, the following Remarks are at your Service.

As your Determination is to apply for Powers to oblige the *Proprietors* of Houses under £10 a year to pay the Parish Rates, thereby to prevent the *Tenant* from gaining a settlement, and as you tell us that you have maturely considered the Magnitude of the evil of the present Assessment, and are fully convinced that no other Remedy can effectually remove it, it is but reasonable we should examine whether there be real necessity for such Application. It seems particularly partial to strike at the Existence of that kind of Property which is universally allowed to be the most precarious, the Rents of Houses being ever fluctuating and uncertain. It is scarcely necessary to remark the consequences to be expected from the Act. Nothing can be more unjust and cruel than to deny a Support in old Age, or even casual Sickness, to the Man that has exhausted his Health and Days in the Manufactories of the Place, whose Landlord has paid the Parish Rates for him. The Law as it stands, is, I believe firmly, sufficient for every Purpose for the Maintenance of the Poor.

The question of a compromise—how English this is!—is introduced, and a meeting is called to ascertain how it may best be brought about :—

Birmingham Public Office, November 10, 1790.—The Public having been impressed with several Notions respecting the Clauses intended to be introduced into the Bill, for compelling Landlords of small Houses &c., to pay Rates for the same; the Committee think it proper to say that it is their Intention to propose that, in certain Cases, where the Landlord, has not received the Rent, he shall not be liable to the Rates; and that the Occupiers of Houses for which the Rates are paid by the Landlord, shall, after having occupied such Houses for a certain number of Years, thereby acquire a Settlement. And it having been intimated that several Proprietors of small Houses are desirous of meeting this Committee with a Plan of Compromise, all such Persons are hereby informed that the Committee are ready to receive, and to give the most liberal Attention to, any Proposals which they may be disposed to make by Letter to the Chairman.

W. VILLERS, Chairman.

On November 22 Mr. Hutton was in the field again; and thus defied his enemies :—

To the Overseers.—Gentlemen, it was not till this day that I learnt from this Paper who my supposed Antagonists were; when I saw a long list of names, a perfect phalanx, strung together in Armour, ready to destroy poor Jukes and Hutton—some of whom I have not the pleasure of knowing, and many of them I have a personal Regard for. But why do you join us together? We never were in Partnership. I will, if you please, stand single; for as neither he, nor any one else, will see what I write before it is submitted to the World, he ought not to be responsible. This is an Advantage thrown into your Scale; for when you have beaten me down you may try your hand upon him. Perhaps you will find him an able Antagonist in the Right. He has already run you out of breath, by hurrying your Account-Books to the Auditors, after they have slept in silent darkness a year. But why so angry? This looks as if you were conscious of holding the weakest side of the Argument. Why do you use the Word *Assassin*? It means an Actor in the Dark. As I always signed what I wrote, the word cannot apply. I shall, however, most cordially excuse *all*. Neither will I meddle with private Character; my Design is not to abuse, but

reform. I shall ever distinguish between the Man and the Officer. If you are wrong, why do not you amend? If right, why do you not tell me wherein I am wrong? "You require me to come openly before a Town's Meeting." I have been openly before the Town many Weeks. Your parochial Follies, Gentlemen, have dragged me upon the public Stage, and I shall tell the World what you have often declared yourselves, "That you are all in the wrong." We are to come, if the Expression will bear a meaning, "in order to relieve the Public." What are we to relieve it from? We never embarrassed it.

It is you who must relieve it, by reducing the Pride of Office.

If I am *ambitious*, it is not for an Emolument or a Place; I never expressed a Wish for either, but to save the Town four or five Levies a Year, and your Credit, while you refuse to save either. Had I wished an Office, your Fondness for Power prohibited all Access. When twelve Bantams guard a Muckhill, no Wonder they spar off every Approacher. You forget that both Mr. Jukes and I, as Guardians, have the same Right in the Vestry as yourselves.

What I said against you in the two Papers I have written, and which you mark with the Names of *ensorious*, *illiberal Aspersions*, *self conceited*, *calumnious*, and *assassin-like*, amounts to this, "That a most admirable Plan was fixed upon by the Town, agreed to by Mr. George Robinson, to be superintended by Mr. Jukes, and watched over by seven of the first Characters among us. This was to reduce the Levies to eight, perhaps seven. But your Pride being unable to brook a competitor, broke the Agreement, by which the Town sustained an irreparable Loss; and to hide this reprehensible Conduct you put forth a Bubble which added to that loss, and, to cover the whole, broached an Act, founded upon the most unjust Principles." This I said, and now ratify. I add, breaking that Agreement was all that I ever laid to your charge: nor need there any more, for this is the grand Hinge upon which a thousand Evils turn; the Master-key which unlocks every Apartment of Mischief. I never blamed you for being twelve, you are not self-chosen; neither have I for not carrying any effective Scheme into Execution. I know it is not in your Power. Your over-grown Number and your fluctuating State as before described, will not allow it. But I severely censure you for not suffering another to do what you are unable to do yourselves; for not delegating that Power to a small Number which your corpulent Body found impossible.

The Tax upon small Houses, could you obtain it, would not relieve you more than two or three Years. It would be no more than a Plaster to ease the Pains in one Part of the Afflicted Body, but augment them in another. Neither is Money wanted. There are unnecessary Thousands annually raised already. Your Conduct must submit to Control; and, however ill you may brook the Remark, I can assure you (without dogmatising or prophesying) it must be so in a short Time, or Ruin will ensue. You are descending the Hill with too much Rapidity to recover *yourselves*. When a foundation is rotten, the Superstructure must be taken down; it will not bear patching.

By a hint in this Day's Paper, a Coalition seems advancing upon the Tapis; at this I shall most ardently rejoice, for I love Peace, and will promote it with all my Powers. In this case I will be the first to throw by that black and pointed Weapon, the Pen. But if this happy Event should not take Place, I shall lay before the World, *The History of Overseership*.

November 15, 1790.

W. HUTTON.

As we have seen, Mr. Hutton was not single-handed in this contest. He had a powerful coadjutor in Mr. Jukes, whose letters are full of fire and force. On December 6, he thus replies to the Overseers, "past and present :"—

To Messrs. T. Cooper, High Street, Thomas Cheston, John Lander, Robert Butcher, William Sergeant, Edward Barker, Humphrey Vale, William Leonard, William Bingley, William Lewin, William Lee, Thomas Mander, Richard Brown, John Clarke, jun., Thomas Potts, John Cook, Matthew Redfern, and William Handasyd, being Overseers of the Poor, and Committee-Men, in Birmingham, for conducting the Application to Parliament for Powers to oblige the Proprietors of Houses under 10*l.* per Year to pay the Parish Rates for the same, and thereby to prevent the Tenant from gaining a Settlement.

Gentlemen,—Having seen your *raving Advertisement* (instead of a Reply to my Letter) in Aris's and Swinney's Papers, dated Vestry Room, Birmingham Workhouse, November 12, 1790, I am much pleased to see your Names annexed to it (as in November, 1789, I could not then bring the Overseers out of their strong Hold, *the Parish Vestry*; they only said, We, the Overseers, &c.) I expected that Letter would make some impression on you. Law and Justice are in our Favour, and they have powerful Arguments. Possibly you might read it in haste; you may now see it at your Leisure in either of the above Papers of the 11th and 15th instant, and it is also reprinted and distributed in the Town. Your charge of my being an Assassin has not the least Foundation in truth. I have always signed my Name to every Letter I have written on this Business. I never thought that any of you had pocketed a Shilling, but was fearful the Money was wasted for want of better Management. Indeed, "*my angry Sirs,*" *believe me I am not disappointed, I foresaw the enormous Expense and Load of Debt* that has been brought on the Town, and which is daily increasing. As this Business is before the Public, I now call for your answer to my Letter of the 10th instant, through the same Channel, signed with your Names, to inform the Town wherein I have falsely represented your conduct as Parish Officers. I have not related one Charge against you but what I believe to be true, *and now call upon each and every one of you to prove the contrary.* You mention your Desire of your Books being brought before a Town's Meeting to be Examined. To examine into the Expenditure of TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS at such Meeting must be clear to every Man that it is impossible for him to see to what purpose so large a Sum has been applied. First have them examined by the Auditors, and then let the Public see them, *with their Report.* I expect your immediate Reply, as probably I may have Occasion to address you again on this Subject.

Birmingham, November 24.

JOSEPH JUKES.

At the same time that the question of rating small tenements was being discussed, the supporters of that bill also petitioned Parliament for a bill to amend the Guardian Act. The defenders of the landlords' interests and of the exemption of small houses from the payment of rates, sought to delay this measure; and in February, 1791, held a meeting, and passed resolutions on the subject :—

Shakespeare Tavern, February 18, 1791.—At a Meeting of the Committee of Proprietors of Houses in Birmingham of less than 10*l.* per Annum,

An Advertisement in Swinney's Paper of Thursday last, for convening a Meeting of the Inhabitants of Birmingham on Tuesday next, to consider of a Petition to Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill, either to amend the Guardian Act by adopting some of the Clauses in that lately obtained for regulating the Poor in the Town of Shrewsbury, *with such others as may be thought necessary*, or to repeal the same, and obtain an Act for the better management of the Poor in this Town, being read,

It was Resolved, That, as a Bill is now pending in Parliament for an Alteration in the Poor's Laws, and as the Period between the Time advertised for such Meeting and the last of presenting such Petitions is too short properly to consider the tendency of the intended Application to Parliament from Birmingham, this Committee think it highly improper to Petition Parliament for any Alteration in the Guardian Act before the Effect of that Bill is known, and that this Resolution be published in next Monday's Paper.

By Order of the Committee,

BENJAMIN PARKER, Solicitor.

On the same day that the above appeared, the supporters of both bills issued the following advertisement :—

February 21, 1791.—The COMMITTEE appointed at the General Meeting of Inhabitants, held at the Hotel, on the 20th of October last, for conducting the Business of an Application to Parliament to oblige the Proprietors of small Houses, Shops, and other Buildings to pay Parish Rates for the same, desire another General Meeting of the Inhabitants, at the same Place, To-morrow, the 22nd of this Month, at Eleven o'Clock in the Morning, to receive their Report, and to Consider of a Petition to Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill, either to amend the present Guardian Act, by adopting some of the Clauses in that lately obtained for regulating the Poor in the Town of Shrewsbury, with such others as may be thought necessary, or to repeal the same, and obtain a new Act for the better management of the Poor in this Town ; it being the Opinion of the Overseers and several of the Guardians, who have consulted together on the Business, that many Regulations are absolutely necessary which are not sufficiently provided for by the present Act.

WILLIAM VILLERS, Chairman.

As will be seen, the meeting called by Mr. Villers resolved on immediate action. The committee appointed to prepare the "heads of a petition" includes some of our best-known Birmingham names :—

Birmingham, February 22, 1791.—At a large and respectable meeting of the Inhabitants of this Town, held this Day, at the Hotel, agreeable to public Advertisements,

MR. W. VILLERS *in the Chair*,

Resolved,—That a Petition be immediately presented to Parliament, for Leave to bring in a Bill to amend or repeal the Guardian Act.

That Joseph Carles, Esq., Matthew Boulton, Esq., William Russell, Esq., Samuel Galton, jun., Esq., Messrs. Charles Lloyd, William Wallis Mason, Samuel Baker, John Ryland, Samuel Ryland, Theodore Price, Humphrey Vale, Thomas Cheston, William Simpson, William Walker, William Villers, Thomas Robinson, Richard Jeffcoate, and Benjamin Parker, be a Committee to prepare the Heads of a Bill, to be laid before the Town for their Approbation, previous to its being carried into the House.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chairman.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be also given to the Overseers, for the Liberality and Public Spirit which they have manifested upon this Occasion. WILLIAM VILLERS.

The overseers entered a protest against the letter of Mr. Parker ; and published the following statement of their collecting books :—

Birmingham Workhouse, February 26, 1791.—Great Inconveniences having arisen to us as Overseers of the Poor, in our different Collections of the Levies, owing to a very illiberal Publication, signed *Benjamin Parker*, dated the 27th of January last, and which was industriously distributed by Joseph Jukes, and James Murray, to the Inhabitants of this Parish ;

We do hereby declare that such Publication was without the Knowledge or Consent of the Auditors of Accounts, and is, upon mature Examination found to be erroneous, calculated to excite Confusion and Discord, and unjustly to calumniate the Characters of a number of respectable Persons, to whom, in presence of several of the Auditors, Benjamin Parker promised to make a proper Concession, but when waited upon by the Vestry Clerk for that purpose, evasively excused himself.

In order, therefore, to do away such false impressions from the minds of the Inhabitants as well as in justice to those Gentlemen involved therein, we affirm the under to be the exact statement of their respective collecting Books, which are all brought in, and closed some weeks since, though the late Double Levy, was granted but eight days before they went out of Office.

William Leonard	Wm. Bingley	Thos. Potts
Thos. Mander	Wm. Lea	John Cook
Hum. Vale	Matt. Redfern	J. S. Clarke
Wm. Lewin	Rd. Brown	Wm. Handasyd

DR.				CR.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To Bull-street quar. . .	1503	19	6	By Voids and diff. . .	169	5	6
„ St. Paul's ditto . .	1471	16	6	„ Ditto	149	7	6
„ Suffolk-st. ditto . .	1471	5	6	„ Ditto	108	17	0
„ New-street ditto . .	1382	9	4	„ Ditto	76	7	0
„ Foreign ditto . .	1273	19	0	„ Ditto	43	12	0
„ Hill-street ditto . .	894	19	6	„ Ditto	139	2	0
				„ Nett Receipts . .	7311	18	4
	£7998	9	4		£7998	9	4

The above is a true Statement of the Accounts of the late Overseers' Collecting Books. Whether do they or any of their Predecessors owe the Parish one Shilling?

February 21, 1791.

THOMAS HARRISON, Vestry Clerk.

Mr. Parker was not, however, easily silenced. He replied to the Overseers, and thus defended the course he had taken :—

March 7, 1791.—I think it a Duty I owe to myself to take some Notice of a Paragraph inserted in this Paper last Monday, dated Birmingham Workhouse, February 26, 1791, and subscribed—

Wm. Leonard	Wm. Bingley	Thos. Potts
Thomas Mander	Wm. Lea	John Cook
Hum. Vale	Matt. Redfern	J. S. Clarke
Wm. Lewin	Rd. Brown	Wm. Handasyd

A Meeting of the Inhabitants of Birmingham was lately convened for the Purpose of obtaining their Assent to an Application to Parliament for an Act to oblige Proprietors of Houses and Buildings under 10*l*. per annum to pay Poor's Rates for their Tenants. The Inhabitants attending the Meeting voted the Measure, and appointed a Committee, of which I was one. The Proprietors of small Houses, being justly alarmed at this Attack on their Property, subscribed a sum of Money to defray the Expenses of opposing the Measure, and I was appointed their Solicitor, and a Committee was appointed for conducting the Opposition ; in this situation I, of course, declined the honour of attending the Committee for conducting the Application to Parliament.

It is a Custom in Birmingham, which has been established a few years, to appoint Auditors to examine the Accounts of Receipts and Expenditures of the Parish Money. The Auditors for the year 1790 advertised a Meeting of the Inhabitants, in the Birmingham Papers, to be held at the Public Office on the 28th of December last, to hear the Report read, and appoint Auditors for the present year. The Meeting was held, the Report read, and other Auditors were appointed for the present year ; and I being one of them, the Book containing the Report read at that Meeting was put into my Hands. A few days afterwards, Mr. Jukes, one of the Auditors for the year 1790, called upon me and requested a Copy of the Report, which one of my Clerks copied for him under my Directions.

Mr. Jukes being one of those Auditors whose Report it was, and that Report having been read at a numerous and respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants, called by public Advertisement for that Purpose, I had not an Idea that I was acting improperly in furnishing him with a Copy of it.

Soon afterwards Mr. Jukes produced the Copy of the Report at a Meeting of the Committee of Proprietors of small Houses, with a Preface, a Copy of which is below ; and it was then agreed by the Committee that the Preface and Report should be printed and distributed among the Inhabitants for their information ; and I was directed by the Committee, as their Solicitor, to Subscribe my Name as such to the Preface, which I did.

It is said by the Overseers, that the Publication was without the Knowledge of the Auditors, to whom I promised to make a proper Concession, but when waited upon by the Vestry Clerk, I evasively excused myself.

The Overseers sent for me one evening, to the Workhouse, shortly after the Publication referred to, and I was asked by one of the present Auditors if it was published by them, or with their privy ? and in reply I told him, as the Truth is, that it was published by the Committee of Proprietors of Small Houses, whom the Overseers of the Poor wished to charge with the Poor's Rates instead of the Tenants. I was then asked if I had any Objection to informing the Public the Auditors had no part in the Publication ? and answered I had none. At this meeting it was agreed on all Hands that Mr. Jukes was entitled to a Copy of the Report, and might have had it on Application at the Vestry.

Some Time after this the Vestry Clerk called upon me with a Note from the Overseers, desiring (if my Recollection is right, for I did not preserve the Note) that I would convene a Meeting of the Auditors, and Advertise that they did not publish the Report, for that they (the Overseers) would not lose Sight of it. I then told the Vestry Clerk that my time and Attention had been so much taken up in Business, with which they were well acquainted, that it had been morally impossible for me to call a Meeting of the late Auditors, but would do it as soon as I could; and would, if they desired it, satisfy the Public that the Report was published by the Committee of small Houses. This is the Concession and Evasion I am charged with!

If the Auditors thought fit to have employed the Vestry Clerk to have called a Meeting, and given me Notice of it, I would have attended it; but every Inhabitant of Birmingham who is acquainted with the public business going forward in the Town, now, and for some time past, and prior to the Publication of the Auditor's Report, knows I have had very little Leisure. If the Complaint against me had been like the noxious publication, distributed in the Town, instead of being published in the Newspaper, I should not have troubled the Public with any answer, as the inhabitants of Birmingham are acquainted with the Business, and sufficiently capable of judging without my troubling myself or them on the present occasion.

Thus have I given a plain simple Narrative of the Transactions alluded to by the Publishers of the Paragraph, which has brought me forth to public Examination; and the impartial Reader will judge how far the beautiful Epithets, abounding in the Publication of the 28th of February last, apply to me.

If those Epithets attach to the Preface, that is the Act of the Committee. If to the Report, that is the Act of the Auditors.

I neither stimulated nor countenanced the Publication in Question. To have done either would have been Arrogance in me; and to suppress or prevent it was not in my power. I did merely what my Situation as Solicitor, in Opposition to the Overseers and those acting with them, imposed upon me; and no selfish Consideration shall ever induce me to shrink from my Duty in any Situation, when that Duty does not clash with my Ideas of moral Rectitude.

BENJAMIN PARKER.

Snow Hill, Birmingham, March 2, 1791.

The following is a Copy of the Preface above referred to.

Shakespear Tavern, January 27th, 1791.

"The Committee appointed by Proprietors of Houses under £10 a Year, against the unjustifiable Attack lately made by the Overseers of the Poor, to oblige them to pay the Parish Rates, and at the same time exclude their Tenants from gaining Settlements, think it a Duty they owe to all Persons interested therein, as well as to the Town at large, to publish the following Report of the Auditors, which was read at a very respectable Town's Meeting called for that purpose; and also the Resolutions entered into at that Meeting.

"The Committee embrace this opportunity of expressing their sincere Thanks to those Gentlemen who voluntarily stepped forth to oppose the said Attack; and likewise to the Auditors for their unwearied Application and Diligence in searching into the Overseer's Accounts for several Years back, and bringing them to public View; by which Means the Payers to the Poor's Rate have now an Opportunity of observing in what Manner the Overseers have transacted the Business, and the Mode of making up their Accounts.

"And the Committee conceive it would be a very material Advantage to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, if the same System was adopted here which is established at Shrewsbury (viz.) to take the Expenditure of the Parish Money wholly out of the Hands of the Overseers of the Poor and invest it in a Committee. The salutary Effects of this Mode at Shrewsbury are too well known to be controverted, and, if adopted in Birmingham, would save the Town many Thousands a Year.

"By Order of the Committee,

"BENJAMIN PARKER, Solicitor."

James Murray* also breaks a lance with the "powers that be," and explains his own share in the acts complained of:—

Birmingham, March 5th, 1791.

Messrs. W. Leonard, Tho. Mander, H. Vale, Wm. Lewin, W. Bingley, W. Lea, M. Redfern, R. Brown, T. Potts, J. Cook, J. S. Clarke, Wm. Handasyd, Overseers of the Poor of Birmingham, and Thomas Harrison, Vestry Clerk.

Gentlemen,

I was in Hopes that I had got thus far through Life without giving any Offence to my Neighbours, and it gives me Concern to find the contrary, by an Advertisement in *Aris's Gazette*, and Swinney's Paper, dated Birmingham Workhouse, February 26, 1791, and signed as above. You there *state* to the Town and the Public that I had *industriously* distributed a Publication, said by you to be "erroneous, and calculated to excite a Confusion, Discord, and unjustly to calumniate the Characters of a Number of respectable Persons." I have bestowed a deal of Time and some Trouble to prevent such direful Effects taking place amongst my Neighbours, and perhaps have been as successful in making Peace and settling jarring interests as any of the respectable twelve above mentioned.

On returning from the Shakespear to a House where I spent the Evening, I was asked to take a parcel of Books, which I did, and inadvertently delivered them there, to the number of six or eight Pamphlets, *is the Truth*, and the Transaction was acknowledged and explained to you a few Evenings after, at a Vestry Meeting held at the Workhouse, Mr. Mander in the Chair; therefore I hope the Candour of the Public will judge how far I have been an *industrious* distributor of *what*? You twelve being a complete Jury, have brought the Pamphlet in guilty of all the above Enormities; yet it is a Copy of the Auditors' Report, read publicly at a respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town, held for that and other Purposes. The Report of the Auditors remains now, by you to be proved erroneous, unless that you allow the Parish Books to be so. I told you at the Vestry, that if your Accounts were just, it were no matter to Officers if they were posted on every Church Door from Berwick-on-Tweed to Portsmouth: if they were not just, or if the Publication of the Auditors' Report discovers anything improper, it is fit that the Town should know how their Money is spent. I can see no crime in the

* James Murray was a linen and woollen draper; he resided in Moor-street, was a member of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, and was most generally known by the name or title of "Cheap John." He emigrated to America, to which place his two sons and two daughters soon afterwards followed him. He was also a member of the "Jacobin Club," or the "Twelve Apostles," who used to meet at Poet Freeth's, in Bell-street. His portrait is the first on the left hand in Eckstein's famous Tontine Painting of the "Twelve," and was evidently "a good portly man, i'faith." These few facts anent him are derived from the Key to the "Tontine Painting," published by Mr. Underwood, in his "Buildings of Birmingham, Past and Present," in 1866.

Publication of Parochial Accounts, and for the future I hope they always will, provided they were stated with Precision, and worded not to mislead; for in Justice to the late Overseers, the Balance that may appear in their Hands by the Auditors' Reports, seems to me to be in the pockets of the Town, uncollected; and to the present Overseers, so far from throwing any obstacle in their Way, I wish it were in my Power to lend them assistance in their painful and troublesome Office.

I owe much to the Town of Birmingham; its Interest and mine, as a Citizen, is the same, and, notwithstanding the Petulance of Overseers, I am ready, with the little share of Abilities that I have, to step forward for the public Good, which has ever been the Wish of their

Obedient humble Servant, JAMES MURRAY.

Can you Twelve, in Conscience, say, that the Advertisement respecting me was free from malice and ill Design to injure me, my Family, and Connections in the eyes of the Town and the Public at large?

A very elaborate and exhaustive letter by Joseph Jukes brought the epistolary part of this controversy to a close. The information which it gives on parish affairs at the end of the eighteenth century makes the document very useful and interesting. We, therefore, present it entire:—

March 14, 1791.

William Leonard
Thomas Mander
Humphrey Vale
William Lewin

William Bingley
William Lea
Matthew Redfern
Richard Brown

Thomas Potts
John Cook
J. S. Clarke
William Handasyd
Overseers of the Poor.

Sirs,—The Advertisement which you were pleased to issue forth from *the heretofore Strong-hold*, the Parish Vestry, dated the 26th of February, 1791, I confess rather excites my Mirth than my Resentment.

The Auditors' Report of the 28th of December last, seems to have given a fatal Blow to the assumed Power and Significance which had so long accompanied the Office of Overseer; and we may shortly expect to see both the Office and the Importance thereof make their Exit. It would have been a happy Circumstance had they expired years ago; immense sums would have been saved to the Parish.

At this Period, the principal Payers to the Poor's Rate, sufficiently understand the Business of Overseering; and perhaps you, Sirs, might have peacefully closed the Career of Office, had not your ill-judged Rashness urged you to call in question the Authenticity of the Auditors' Report.

I now, therefore, challenge you to prove it to be erroneous (in any material Degree), notwithstanding you have boldly asserted that it is so "*upon mature consideration.*"

Be pleased to observe, that I have sufficient Documents in my Possession, which bear ample Testimony of the Truth of their Report; and, admitting that their may be some little inaccuracies in stating it, those by no means invalidate its general Tenor, and may probably arise from the mode of Book-keeping practised by the Vestry Clerk, Thomas Harrison. Pray do have the Goodness to examine the Parish Books attentively, and

point out to the Town wherein the Auditors have erred. What just Cause have you to be so much offended at the Publication of the Auditors' Report? It neither relates to you nor your Accounts. They have not yet been Audited. If any of your Predecessors conceive themselves aggrieved thereby, certainly they may plead their own Cause without your Assistance. But perhaps they have retained you as their advocate.

How ridiculous does your conduct appear in forestalling the Business of the Auditors, and appointing Thomas Harrison, the Vestry Clerk, Inspector of and Voucher for their Accounts!

Upon what Foundation can you assert the Report in question to be an illiberal one? *Is it improper that the Payers to the Poor's Rates should know how their Money has been applied?*

Do you mean to infer that I have been an Instrument of exciting "Confusion or Discord" among the Inhabitants, or "unjustly to calumniate the Character of any Person?" If you do, I must plainly tell you that you are guilty of great injustice to me; for it is well known that all my exertions hitherto have been solely aimed at the ruinous and destructive SYSTEM practised by the Overseers as a Body, and not at the Individual who might accidentally compose a Part of it. I shall now declare the Motive for publishing the Auditors' Report, viz., The Committee appointed by Proprietors of Houses under Ten Pounds a year, against your late unjustifiable attack, being informed that great Numbers of the most respectable Payers to the Poor's Rates, as likewise the Proprietors of small Houses, &c., would have been glad to have heard the Auditors' Report which was read at the Public Office, at a Town's Meeting (called for that Purpose), on the 28th December last, they took the same into Consideration, and ordered *one Thousand Copies to be printed and distributed among the Inhabitants, not wishing to send it through the Channel of the Newspapers.* My good Sirs, does this merit those *handsome Eulogiums* which you have been pleased to confer upon it from your *renowned Sanctuary* in Lichfield-Street?

I shall now, without further preface, take the Liberty to insert the following Extract from the Auditors' Report, viz.,

"There seems to have been great Remisness in closing the collecting Books of the Overseers, a Number of them not having appeared before the Auditors until many Months after they should have been compleatly settled. That the Town may judge of the Propriety of this Remark, the Auditors present the following Statement of the Overseers' Cash Accounts since Easter, 1785, *when the Number of the Overseers was increased by Act of Parliament.*

"N.B.—The Auditors have transcribed a particular Statement of each of the Overseers' Accounts, as it respects the Payments they have made, after the fourteen Days subsequent to the Easter and Michaelmas, when their collecting Books ought to have been closed, and the Balance paid in. This Statement they have been ready to produce; but as it is their Desire to avoid as much as possible the appearance of any Thing personal, they propose, unless called upon for that Statement, only to report generally to this Meeting that the Overseers who went out of Office, Michaelmas, 1785, and who should have closed their Accounts and paid their Balances the 13th of October following, were, on the *Face of their Books*, indebted to the Public, exclusive of the Voids and Deficiencies, a clear Balance of £942 19s. od.

"The Payments of the Overseers who went out of Office, Easter, 1786, are not regularly dated, so that their Balances unpaid cannot be ascertained.

"The Overseers, 1786, Michaelmas, their clear Balances unpaid, fourteen Days after their collecting Books should have been closed, amount to	£282	6	11
Ditto, 1787, Easter	270	3	11
Ditto, 1787, Michaelmas	532	0	0
Ditto, 1788, Easter	523	9	7
Ditto, 1788, Michaelmas	680	13	3
Ditto, 1789, Easter	357	16	7
Ditto, 1789, Michaelmas	487	15	11
Ditto, 1790, Easter	553	13	5
Ditto, 1790, Michaelmas, their Accounts are not yet closed, the Balances appear about	1410	19	9

This Balance, however, is subject to a Deduction for the Balance of Voids, Deficiencies, and Additions upon the Accounts yet unclosed, which by a Calculation founded on a Reference to former Accounts, may Amount to about 391 9 1

In that Case their clear Balance to be accounted for, fourteen Days after their collecting Books should be closed, would be about 1019 10 8

"The Auditors conceive that the Overseers' Accounts continuing so long unsettled, and the Balances remaining in their hands, is illegal in itself, and an Injustice to the Public. That the Overseers have no right to distrain for Levies after they are out of Office, and that their omitting to take Summons in due Time is a Loss to the Town, increases Difficulties on those who succeed them, and it is a reprehensible Mode of conducting the Public Business which ought immediately to be discontinued.

"With respect to the Bye Bills, it appears that the Debts incurred have not been regularly discharged, either at the Ends of the respective Bye Bills or the ends of the respective Quarters ; nor does it appear when the Overseers' Accounts *are closed*, that the Debts incurred while they were in Office are paid. As no Accounts are entered in their Books until they are discharged, it is impossible, from the annual Account, to form any accurate Idea of the real annual Expense of the Poor.

"The Auditors, therefore, state it as their unanimous Opinion, that each Overseer should discharge every Expense incurred during his Bye Bill, and that the whole yearly Expense and Collections be fairly brought to Account and settled in fourteen Days after Easter, in conformity to the express Directions of the Law and *the Resolutions of a Town's Meeting* of the 12th of January, 1790.

"Another circumstance appears highly deserving the Attention of the Public (*viz.*), of Overseers, whilst they are in Office, serving the Workhouse with Articles in which they Deal. This is a *Practice unbecoming in itself*, liable to great abuse, and, in several instances, in late Acts of Parliament, prohibited by the Legislature.

"The Auditors feel it a *painful Task* to state the preceding Facts respecting the Overseers' Accounts, but they conceive it to be their Duty not to come before the Town with vague and unsupported Observations.

"To *these Facts*, and not to Individuals, they wish to call the Attention of the Public ; and their Motive is, that such a Censure (without any Reference to Persons) may be passed upon the Practices as shall effectually put an End to a System unbecoming and illegal in itself, and unjust and oppressive in its Consequences."

Had the Auditors recurred but a few Years further back to the Overseers' Accounts, they would have found that, prior to their increase from six to twelve, six Levies of 900*l.* each were *one* Year sufficient for the support of the Poor, and that the Overseers also regularly paid all their Tradesmen's Bills and closed their Accounts at the Appointment of new ones, and immediately paid their Balance of 138*l.* 16*s.* 8½*d.* into the Hands of their Successors. But since their Number was augmented to twelve, the Town has been heavily oppressed by Levies, which now amount to the enormous sum of 1400*l.* monthly, notwithstanding which the Poor are not one jot better provided for than formerly. These circumstances are mentioned to show the miserable condition we are in, and the absolute Necessity there is of adopting a better Mode.

The Meeting of the principal Inhabitants at the Hotel, on the 22nd of February last, seems to forebode much real Advantage to the Town. A Committee was then chosen to prepare the Heads of a Bill for the better Management of the Poor. The Chairman very candidly declared that no Clause should be inserted in the Bill to oblige the Proprietors of Houses under 10*l.* a Year to pay the Parish Rates for their Tenants; but such only from the Shrewsbury Act that had evidently proved useful there, and such others as the Committee might think proper for the General good of the Town, which Clauses should be laid before the Inhabitants for their Approbation previously to going to Parliament. These Proceedings must afford much Pleasure to every true Friend of the Town, of which description I am ever happy to subscribe myself.

JOSEPH JUKES.

Birmingham, March 11, 1791.

The next step is recorded in this notice :—

NEW GUARDIAN ACT.

May 9, 1791.—The Committee appointed by the Town to prepare the Heads of a Bill for the better Regulation of the Poor, desire a Meeting of the Inhabitants at the Hotel, To-morrow Morning, the 10th instant, at Ten o'Clock precisely, to consider the Clauses of the said Bill; and as it will necessarily require a long Attendance, they have desired the High Bailiff to take the Chair exactly at the Time fixed, and to proceed immediately in reading the Clauses.

With a View further to accelerate the Business of the Day, the Committee think proper to inform the Public, that they intend meeting at the Hotel this Morning, at Nine o'Clock, where they will be glad to receive such of their Neighbours as may have remarks to offer, or Amendments to propose, it being their Wish that every Objection may be deliberately attended to, and every Amendment fully adopted, previous to the public Meeting.

WM. VILLERS, Chairman.

The meeting was held; the cause of justice triumphed. Small tenements were rated in spite of the small landlord influence. The New Guardian Act passed; and so terminated this little epic of a parochial contest. The information contained in the various letters quoted; the great interest of this episode in our local history; and the part which William Hutton took in it, would be a sufficient justification—if any justification were needed—for the space which we have devoted to this resuscitation of a bit of Birmingham life nearly eighty years ago.*

* It is a curious fact, that Hutton, in his Autobiography, makes no allusion to this agitation or the part he played in it.

THE BIRMINGHAM RIOTS.

We have now to relate briefly one of the most, if not the most disastrous and disgraceful of the public events in the history of our hundred years. The story of the Birmingham Riots has often been told, and its main incidents are familiar to the public. Dr. Priestley has written on the subject, and a month following the outbreak Hutton penned his naturally irritable record of the violent and shameful proceedings of the brutal and infuriated mob. A tract, giving an authentic account of the riots and the trials of the rioters, which is now rather scarce, was published in the same year. This tract is little more than a republication from the *Gazette* of the reports, advertisements, and letters which appeared on the subject in that paper. In the report of the riots the wording and arrangement is slightly altered in places, but substantially it is the same; although one or two very important paragraphs are omitted. Mr. William Hawkes Smith, in his little book, "Birmingham and its Vicinity, as a Manufacturing and Commercial District," gives a concise, but clear account of these four days of vulgar saturnalia. It will not therefore be necessary that we should reproduce here all the documents published on this exciting subject. We propose, therefore, to trace the cause, to note the beginning of the outbreak, to extract in full the *Gazette* report of the four days' violence, as the most graphic yet published, and to gather up the results in as brief a summary as possible. This book, indeed, would be sadly incomplete if it did not include a full record of the Birmingham Riots of July 14, 15, 16, and 17, 1791.

However much we may be indignant at the bigotry which fostered and encouraged this outbreak, and at the ignorant violence which was its too ready instruments, there is nothing surprising in the event. The student of human nature and of human history knows that religious and political enthusiasm and fanaticism are ever the most potent instruments of mischief. In the reign of George the Third, these terrible passions were at their height. The horrors of the French Revolution had literally made men mad in their hatred of reform, and all those who saw deeper than the bloody deeds which generations of tyranny and oppression had made possible, and believed in the good that would

ultimately flow from this terrible upheaving, were looked upon as traitors to their country, as the friends of blood-thirsty violence, and the advocates of license as contra-distinguished from liberty. The whole country looked upon this very small minority as false to every principle of humanity, patriotism, religion, and truth. The government, inspired by the fiery zeal of Burke, were prepared to go to any extreme of vigour and persecution to prevent the spread of what were called French principles in England; and the almost unanimous voice of the people was on their side. Partial and terrified authority was on the side of terrified ignorance and brutality. Mr. W. Hawkes Smith has well said, "The necessity for that education which the wealthier classes have since, in their own defence, offered to the inferior orders of society, had then scarcely manifested itself. The project of the benevolent Raikes for giving Sunday instruction to the children of the poor, had been in operation only ten years, and was but slowly rising into notice, so that the mass of the working classes were in a state very well fitted to receive prejudices and delusions, if offered to them by those to whom they had been accustomed to look up with conventional reverence."

Besides being animated with the same spirit which distinguished the nation at this period, there were circumstances which especially embittered the political relations of the two parties in Birmingham. Religious differences added their virulence to those of politics. For eleven years the celebrated Dr. Priestley had lived and laboured amongst us. During that time he pursued those scientific investigations and experiments which have placed his name high on the list of our noblest benefactors, and won for it the admiration of the world. He had also engaged in those historical and philosophical enquiries which were as attractive to his truth-seeking mind as were his more positive and fruitful labours in the fields of science. To these works he added that of being a zealous controversialist. During the brief time he lived and laboured in Birmingham he was engaged in controversies of all kinds; and these he conducted in a manner which must have been as gall and wormwood to his opponents. There was a tone of irony in his many letters and addresses which must have stung to the

quick the members and friends of the Church of England, and the lovers of things as they were. The temper of these men may be seen by the fierce, intemperate, and uncharitable tracts in which they assailed the Doctor and his teachings. Before the celebration of the anniversary of the French Revolution fanned the long pent up ire into an active flame, bitter feelings had been raised by years of such controversy as leads to anything but truth and Christian forbearance ; because on one side it is conducted with a narrowness and a bigotry which are deaf to everything but the voice of passion ; and on the other by an avowal of superiority and a pity for the blindness of opponents, which is especially irritating, and is, perhaps, as far from Christian charity as the other. How earnestly this controversy was engaged in will be seen by the number of tracts published in Birmingham in the eleven years that Dr. Priestley lived here. In estimating the causes which led to this shameful outbreak, we must not omit the fact that, whether they were so or not, the friends of the French Revolution were almost all represented as belonging to the actively-benevolent, but then persecuted and despised, sect of Socinians. It was, perhaps, the unpardonable fault of Dr. Priestley that he was a Minister, and one of the most earnest and laborious defenders of the doctrines and tenets of this body of Dissenters.

The public mind had been kept in a high state of excitement by these controversies. In the tracts produced by the motion to exclude books of polemical divinity from the Old Library, founded in 1779, but to which Dr. Priestley, in 1782, gave "stability and method," there is a virulence which shows how strongly men's passions, and not their reason, guided them in this controversy. There is no word too hard to be applied to the great Unitarian divine. He is accused of the worst designs, and represented as influenced by the basest motives. Nor was the Doctor himself quite free from that zeal of controversy which impels a man to say and write words which may erroneously be perverted to mean the opposite to what their author intended. He believed in what he called the power of truth, but like so many other writers, of every sect and religion in the world, he meant by truth, his own interpretation of it. He, like his less gifted compeers, forgot the

noble fable told by Milton, and having found one member of the Goddess, proclaimed that he had recovered the whole body. There is great excuse for this, for Dr. Priestley was one of the best abused men of a time when abuse compared with that of these "degenerate days" was as mud to snow. Every pulpit beat "the drum ecclesiastic" against this arch heretic. Pamphlet on pamphlet, tract on tract, and volume on volume were hurled against this mighty foe, and he was held up everywhere to the hatred of loyal people, and branded as an enemy to the institutions of the country of which he was a citizen. Nor was Dr. Priestley slow to engage in the fight. Controversy seems to have had an especial charm for his active mind. He evidently liked the charge, the onset, and the encounter. His beloved laboratory was not powerful enough to keep him from breaking a lance with these incessant assailants. The great powers of his mind were never more active than when engaged in controversy. Although devotedly attached to science and philosophy, he dearly loved an intellectual fight, and he was a bold and unsparing combatant. He had raised the enmity of the Church party in the town by the part he took in the agitation against the Test and Corporation Acts, and he was the mark aimed at by nearly all the defenders of those abominable laws. No words were too bad to apply to him, no motives too base to impute. Even the good Bishop Horsley called him a wilful liar, and harmless words of his were quoted in the House of Commons as proofs of the clearest sedition. The Doctor had written these remarkable sentences: "The present silent propagation of truth may be compared to those causes in nature which lie dormant for a time, but which, in proper circumstances, act with the greatest violence. We are, as it were, laying gunpowder, grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion, in consequence of which, that edifice, the erection of which has been the work of ages, may be overturned in a moment, and so effectually as that the same foundation can never be built upon again." We have had too many instances in our own time not to see how easily such words could be perverted so as to excite the fears of the timid, the zeal of the interested, and the violent antagonism of the ignorant and the bigoted. It was reported everywhere that Dr.

Priestley had said he "would not insure the ecclesiastical establishment of this country for twenty years," and that "he was laying grains of gunpowder which would blow up the fabric." In the first of his "Familiar Letters addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham," Dr. Priestley thus alludes to this misrepresentation :—"You have been told in a variety of publications that I have threatened to blow up the church, if not the state also, with *gunpowder*. * * * * Now, my good friends and neighbours, I am not actually a madman ; you know too much of me to believe *this* ; you see me walk about the streets very composedly, without molesting anybody, and always behaving civilly to those who behave civilly to me, and therefore I hope you will not think I have any such diabolical intention. In fact, all the gunpowder that I manufacture is contained in such pamphlets as this you are now reading, and though it may serve for wadding to a gun, it can do nothing else towards killing birds, or killing men. My gunpowder is nothing but *arguments*, which can have no force but what you yourselves shall be pleased to give them, from your own conviction of the reasonableness of what I lay before you." These arguments were more dreaded by the Powers that were than gunpowder itself, and the ignorant and deluded mob of those days were as "easily led by the nose as asses are." To them Dr. Priestley was a seditious Unitarian who desired to blow up Church and State with gunpowder.

Our venerable and learned townsman, and late Recorder, Mr. M. D. Hill, in his admirable address delivered at the Midland Institute, on September 30th of the present year (1867), thus refers to the Riots :—

Circumstances had in this town already exacerbated ill feeling to an extent beyond experience elsewhere ; and when the French Revolution arrived to heap fuel on the fire, it was scarcely possible that Birmingham should escape an explosion. It came ; the signal being a dinner given to commemorate the fall of the Bastille by the party favourable to the changes made in the constitution of the French Government. That meeting, which took place in July, 1791, was, I must think, a false step. In our own day all good citizens would revolt from making such an exploit, sullied as it was by a blood-thirsty violation of the terms of surrender, the ground of a convivial celebration, however they might reconcile themselves to the event for the sake of the principles which it confirmed and signalized. On the other hand, it would now be impossible for a sovereign of England to comment on the appalling ravages by fire and plunder which broke forth in revenge for that dinner, in the tone adopted by George III. The King, writing to Mr. Secretary Dundas, in approval of dragoons having been sent to Birmingham to quell

the tumult, thus continues :—"Though I cannot but feel better pleased that Priestley is the sufferer for the doctrines he and his party have instilled, and that the people see them in their true light, yet I cannot approve of their having employed such atrocious means of showing their discontent." If the King, who was at heart a just man, and a lover of science, had known that Priestley was utterly incapable of suggesting violence against person or property, and that the suffering to which his Majesty alluded was the destruction of that philosophical apparatus by which the great philosopher had made discoveries earning for him the title of the Founder of Modern Chemistry, not even the excitement which pervaded the whole country could have urged him to a declaration so much to be lamented. That Dr. Priestley recoiled from the employment of physical force, however righteously provoked, I can testify from the information of my father, one of a number of young men of Dr. Priestley's congregation who hastened to his house imploring him to let them defend it against the rage of the approaching mob, whose long remembered war cry, "Church and King," was already heard in the distance. This offer he at once declined, expressing his conviction "that it was his duty as a Christian Minister to submit to persecution."

Such was the state of feeling in the town when, in the *Gazette* published on July 11, this advertisement appeared :—

Hotel, Birmingham, July 7, 1791.

Commemoration of the French Revolution.

A number of Gentlemen intend DINING together on the 14th instant, to commemorate the auspicious day which witnessed the Emancipation of Twenty-six Millions of People from the yoke of Despotism, and restored the blessings of equal Government to a truly great and enlightened Nation, with whom it is our interest, as a commercial People, and our Duty as Friends to the General Rights of Mankind, to promote a free intercourse, as subservient to a permanent Friendship.

Any Friend to Freedom, disposed to join this intended temperate Festivity, is desired to leave his Name at the Bar of the Hotel, where Tickets may be had at 5s. each, including a Bottle of Wine, but no person will be admitted without one.

* * * Dinner will be on the Table at Three o'clock precisely.

The tocsin of war was sounded in the same paper, for immediately under the above advertisement, and on its *first*, and not *second*, appearance, as stated in "an Authentic Account," we find this ominous announcement :—

On Friday next will be published,

Price ONE HALFPENNY,

AN AUTHENTIC List of all those who Dine at the Hotel, in Temple Row, Birmingham, on Thursday, the 14th instant, in Commemoration of the French Revolution.

Vivant Rex et Regina.

An indiscreet friend, or a mischievous enemy, helped on the denouement by privately circulating the following handbill. It is quite as probable that it was the work of a foolish and over-zealous Liberal as of a cunning and a strategic Tory. We have seen similar mistakes made

in later political agitations; and as there is no absolute proof as to the authorship of this republican handbill we accept it as *bonâ fide*—as containing the real sentiments of the writer. It is as follows :—

My Countrymen,

The second year of Gallic Liberty is nearly expired. At the commencement of the third, on the 14th of this month, it is devoutly to be wished that every enemy to civil and religious despotism would give his sanction to the *majestic common cause* by a public celebration of the anniversary. Remember that on the 14th of July the Bastille, that “High Altar and Castle of Despotism,” fell. Remember the enthusiasm peculiar to the cause of Liberty, with which it was attacked. Remember that generous humanity that taught the oppressed, groaning under the weight of insulted rights, to save the lives of oppressors! Extinguish the mean prejudices of nations; and let your numbers be collected and sent as a free-will offering to the National Assembly.

“But is it possible to forget that our own Parliament is venal? Your Minister hypocritical? Your clergy legal oppressors? The Reigning Family extravagant? The crown of a certain Great Personage becoming every day too weighty for the head that wears it? Too weighty for the People who *gave* it? Your Taxes partial and excessive? Your Representation a cruel *insult* upon the sacred rights of Property, Religion, and Freedom?

“But, on the 14th of this month, prove to the political sycophants of the day, that you reverence the Olive Branch; that you *will* sacrifice to public Tranquility, till the majority *shall* exclaim, *The Peace of Slavery is worse than the war of Freedom.* Of that moment let Tyrants beware.”

The truths mentioned in this handbill were such as no Tory would have ventured to propagate even as a political move. How the loyal party looked upon it is seen by a rejoinder which was issued on the 11th. It is entitled

An Incendiary Refuted.

A Paper having been distributed in the town this morning, evidently calculated to weaken the attachment of the people to the present excellent form of government, and to excite tumults similar to those which have produced the most atrocious murders, anarchy, and distress in a neighbouring kingdom, it is thought proper to apprise the good and peaceable subjects of this place, that *every portion* in that seditious handbill is as *false* and *factionous* as the *wretch* who composed it.

“The perfect enjoyment we now experience of every blessing, freedom, and protection a mild government can bestow, is the best refutation of the detestable calumnies of the handbill; and whatever the *modern republicans* may imagine, or the *regicidal propounders of the rights of man* design, let us convince them there is enough of loyalty in the majority of the inhabitants of this country to *support* and *defend* their King, and that we are not so destitute of common sense as not to prefer the *order, liberty, happiness, and wealth*, which is diffused through every portion of the British Empire, to the *anarchy, the licentiousness, the poverty, and the misery*, which now overwhelm the degraded kingdom of France.

Birmingham, Monday, July 11, 1791.

The magistrates offered a reward of one hundred guineas to anyone who would discover either the writer, printer, publisher, or distributor, of the first quoted handbill, so that he or they might be convicted thereof. The secret, however, was well kept, and all concerned escaped the tender mercies of the Sedition Law. The gentlemen who proposed to hold the celebration also published a statement of their views on the subject. In the *Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle*, on Thursday, the 14th, the morning of the commemoration, this advertisement appeared:—

Birmingham Commemoration of the French Revolution.

Several handbills having been circulated in the town, which can only be intended to create distrust concerning the intention of the meeting, to disturb its harmony, and influence the minds of the people, the gentlemen who proposed it think it necessary to declare their entire disapprobation of all such handbills, and their ignorance of the authors.

Sensible themselves of a free government, they rejoice in the extension of Liberty to their Neighbours; at the same time avowing, in the most explicit manner, their *firm attachment* to the *Constitution of their own Country*, as vested in the Three Estates of *King, Lords, and Commons*. Surely no Free-born Englishman can refrain from exulting in this addition to the general mass of human happiness! It is the Cause of Humanity! It is the Cause of the People.

If this reiteration of principles produced any effect at all, it was only that of increasing the excitement. The Dinner was held, the toasts proposed, the company had separated, and the riots commenced. For four days the mob had unlimited license to burn and plunder to their hearts' content. That there was some guiding spirit in their lawless proceedings is evident from the fact that only the meeting houses and private dwellings of the Unitarians were attacked. The magistrates were impotent, and did nothing until Saturday, the 16th, when they published this notice:—

Birmingham, July 16, 1791.—*Friends and Fellow-Countrymen*,—It is earnestly requested that every True Friend to the Church of England, and to the Laws of his Country, will reflect how much a continuance of the Present Proceedings must injure that Church and that King they are intended to support; and how highly Unlawful it is to destroy the Rights and Property of any of our Neighbours. And all True Friends to the Town and Trade of Birmingham, in particular, are Intreated to Forbear immediately from all Riotous and Violent Proceedings; dispersing and returning peaceably to their Trades and Callings, as the only Way to do Credit to themselves and their Cause, and to promote the Peace, Happiness, and Prosperity of this Great and Flourishing Town."

Rather a strange appeal to a violent mob, engaged in the charming pursuits of burning and plundering the houses of their neighbours. On

Sunday this was followed by an official document of a more urgent character :—

Birmingham, Sunday, July 17, 1791.

Important Information to the Friends of the CHURCH and the KING.

Friends and Fellow Countrymen,—Being convinced you are unacquainted that the great Losses which are sustained by your burning and destroying the Houses of so many Individuals, will eventually fall upon the County at large, and not upon the Persons to whom they belonged, we feel it our duty to inform you, that the Damages already done, upon the best Computation that can be made, will amount to upwards of *One Hundred Thousand Pounds*, the whole of which enormous Sum will be charged upon the respective Parishes, and paid out of the Rates. We, therefore, as your Friends, conjure you to immediately desist from the destruction of any more Houses; otherwise the very proceedings which your zeal for shewing your attachment to the Church and King will inevitably be the means of most seriously injuring innumerable Families who are hearty supporters of Government, and bring on an Addition of Taxes which yourselves and the rest of the Friends of the Church will for years feel a very grievous Burthen.

This we assume was the Case in London, when there were so many Houses and Public Buildings burnt and destroyed in the year 1780; and you may rely upon it will be so here on the present occasion.

And we must observe to you that any further violent Proceedings will more offend your KING and COUNTRY than secure the cause of HIM and the CHURCH.

Fellow Countrymen,—As you love your King, regard his Law and Restore Peace.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Aylesford	Edward Carver	Charles Curtis
E. Finch	John Brooke	Spencer Madan
Robert Lawley	J. Carles	Edward Palmer
Robert Lawley, jun.	B. Spencer	W. Villers
R. Moland	Henry Gresw. Lewis	W. Wallis Mason
W. Digby		

To this extraordinary document the editor adds the following paragraph :—"The above very earnest entreaty and serious remonstrance of the Noble Earl, of the Magistrates, of the principal Gentlemen of the neighbourhood, of the two Rectors and Inhabitants of the Town, who are all so firmly attached to the KING and the present Constitution both in CHURCH and STATE, will, we trust, have their due effect; and that all Friends to the existing Government, every true Church and King's man, will retire to their respective Homes, and thereby set an example of that peace and order which is now become so essential to this Town and Neighbourhood."

The report of the riots did not appear in the *Gazette* until the 25th. As this is the best account published, we quote it here :—

THE RIOTS.

Birmingham, July 25.—In compliance with the wishes of the Magistrates, we forbore to detail in our last the violent proceedings and depredations of a lawless mob, which assembled in this town on Thursday the 14th instant. On that day upwards of 80 gentlemen met and dined at the Hotel, to commemorate the anniversary of the French Revolution. Dinner was served up at three o'clock, and between five and six, after several toasts had been drank and a few songs sung, the company separated and departed to their respective houses. Unfortunately, however, copies of a very seditious and criminal handbill having been left in a public house, and also sent to some neighbouring towns (for discovering the author, printer, or publisher of which, the Magistrates and other gentlemen offered a reward of one hundred guineas), the minds of the people were greatly inflamed by it; and the gentlemen who had concerted the anniversary dinner, aware that it might have an effect to disturb the harmony of the meeting, published an advertisement, disclaiming the least knowledge of the author of it, and their entire disapprobation of the inflammatory paper. Notwithstanding this, the populace assembled round the Hotel, and hissed and hustled the gentlemen as they went to the dinner; and about eight o'clock at night they re-assembled in a large body, and, regardless of the interference of the Magistrates, forcibly entered the tavern and broke all the windows of it; they then proceeded to the New Meeting House, which they set on fire, and in a very short period reduced it to its shell. About the same time the Old Meeting House was attacked by another party. With iron crows and rails they tore down the pulpit, pews, galleries, &c., and conveyed them into the adjoining burying ground, where, after the roof and walls of the Meeting were battered down, they were burnt; the leaders of the mob declaring no fire should be set to the place whilst standing, lest it should communicate to the next buildings, and in this, as well as in other instances, evincing a desire that those places only against which there rage was directed should suffer, and the town be saved from a general conflagration.

The Meetings had not long been entered before the general cry was "to Dr. Priestley's!" and in a short time his house at Fair-hill (a mile and a half from the town) was attacked by the rioters with the most incredible fury. They began by breaking down the doors and windows, and throwing from every part of the house the furniture, library, &c. They mentioned the Doctor's name with vehement execrations, and expressed their disappointment at not having possessed themselves of his person, as he had, happily, made his escape just before they reached his house, though he had not had time to save any of his deeds or of his manuscripts. The loss of the latter the Doctor greatly deploras, as, he has observed, they were the result of laborious study of many years, and which he shall never be able to recompose.

The shrubs, trees, &c., in the garden were all trampled down or torn up; but there was reason for some time to hope that the Elabourary (a little distance from the house) would have been saved; nor did it appear to have been noticed as long as the liquors in the cellar lasted; of the spirituous part of which some of the rioters had drank so immoderately, that they seemed no longer to have existence; while others had been rendered so extremely quarrelsome by the plentiful draughts they had taken of wine and ale, that no less than nine or ten different battles among themselves were at one time being fought in the adjoining field. The battles collected the greater part of the rioters around them, and the house (the floors of which were now all strewed over with torn manuscripts, books, &c.), was,

as long as they lasted, almost entirely cleared of them ; when, however, they were over, the rioters returned to the premises ; the Elaboratory was then broken into, the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments that (according to the Doctors declaration) perhaps any individual, in this or in any other country, was ever possessed of, was destroyed ; the whole building was soon after set on fire ; a man was killed by the falling of a cornice stone, and nothing of the house, offices, &c., now remains but the bare walls ; some cart loads of the books, however, were luckily saved.*

On Friday morning, as they recovered from the fatigue and intoxication of the preceding night, different parties of the rioters entered the town, to the great consternation of all the inhabitants. The doors of every place of confinement were thrown open, and they paraded through the streets, armed with bludgeons, loudly vociferating " Church and King ! " words which all the inhabitants now chalked upon their window shutters and doors for the security of their dwellings. In the course of the morning, the Earl of Aylesford (to whose indefatigable attention and exertions the town has been highly indebted at this alarming season) arrived at Dr. Priestley's ; he harangued what remained of the mob at Fairhill, and brought them from the scene of devastation into the town, where he again addressed them, and persuaded them to disperse, and retire to their homes and respective occupations. At the same time the Magistrates of the place, Mr. Moland, of Springfield, and the principal inhabitants, were with other parties of the rioters, in the New Church Yard, endeavouring, by the most conciliating language, to induce them to separate, and desist from further violence. All attempts, however, to check their proceedings and restore peace and order, proved fruitless. About two o'clock the elegant mansion of Mr. John Riland (late Mr. Baskerville's) at Easy-hill, was attacked and, though the rioters were once or twice repulsed, it was not long before they possessed themselves of the house and set it on fire. Here many of them were so insensible of their danger that the flames caught them in the upper chambers, and others were in such a state of intoxication that they could not be drawn from, but perished in, the cellar. Three, most terribly scorched and bruised, were conveyed to the Hospital ; seven ladies, so much disfigured that they could hardly be recognised, have been dug out of the ruins ; and a man, on Monday (who had been immured in one of the vaults), worked his way out. He lived only to say, he knew by the groans that he heard that several had expired in a worse situation than—and he expired as they laid him upon the grass. Whilst the house of Mr. Riland was burning, the Magistrates, anxious to preserve the Town from further outrage until the military could arrive, adopted the measure of swearing in a number of the inhabitants as additional Constables. A party of them immediately proceeded to Mr. Riland's ; but after a conflict of some continuance, they were driven off by the enraged multitude, and obliged to retire without effecting any useful purpose. Information, about the same time, being received that the country residence of John Taylor, Esq., at Bordesley (about half a mile from the town) was attacked, another party of the gentlemen who had been sworn Constables, headed by Captain Carver, repaired thither ; they found the rioters in the cellars, and drove them from the premises, of which they kept possession a sufficient length of time to remove most of Mr. Taylor's title deeds, writings, &c., and some small part of the furniture. Towards the evening, however, by the junction of those from Mr. Riland's and other parts, the rioters had acquired such an accession of strength that all

* Of these cart loads of books, which are here said to have been saved, only one is known to exist at present. This is a fragment of Dr. Priestley's Diary, now in the possession of Dr. J. B. Davis, of Shellow. It was exhibited at the Priestley Commemoration, held at the Midland Institute, April 2, 1867.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS
AS IT APPEARED IN 1754
BY J. H. P. & CO. 1854



resistance here was ineffectual, and many of the Gentlemen were much beaten. Under these circumstances, Captain Carver made a last effort to save the house. He offered the rioters the immediate payment of one hundred guineas if they would not burn it. He was answered by the cry of no bribery, hustled immediately into the midst of them, and narrowly escaped their fury. When the night set in the flames appeared through the roof, and this beautiful and spacious mansion, with most of its superb furniture, stables, offices, and ricks, is reduced to its mere walls. This night the house of Mr. Hutton, in the High street, which had been assaulted once or twice during the day, was entered, and completely stripped of its contents; his large stock of paper, his son's very valuable library, and all his furniture, were destroyed or carried away. This depredation was committed chiefly by boys and prostitutes. A woman made an attempt to fire the House, but she was knocked down by the populace, who took the light from her, and, out of regard to the neighbouring buildings, would not suffer it to be applied.

From Mr. Hutton's house in town, they proceeded early on Saturday morning to his country house at Washwood Heath, three miles hence, which, with its offices, they reduced to ashes. This morning, also, an attack was made upon Mr. George Humphry's house at Sparkbrook. The rioters were kept off for some time, but they at length entered it, ransacked it, but did not burn it. They then proceeded to the house of William Russel, Esq., at Showell Green, which they consumed; and such was the violence of the fire, that only a few walls remain. Mr. T. Hawkes, at Moseley Wake Green, was the next sufferer; his house was stripped of its windows, books, and furniture, which they either carried away or broke in pieces.

The Rioters having, in the morning, sent notice to the Dowager Countess of Carhampton that, as her residence was the property of Mr. Taylor, they should certainly destroy it, and that she must, in a few hours, remove herself and goods; that noble and worthy lady sent her furniture to a neighbouring house, and was herself conveyed by Sir Robert Lawley to Coleshill, where we believe she still remains: and in the evening Moseley Hall, a large and lately-built stone edifice, with its offices, stables, hay-stacks, &c.; the house of Mr. Harwood in the neighbourhood; and the house of the Rev. Mr. Hobson, a dissenting minister, on the Moseley road, were all on fire at the same time. The terror and distress which pervaded the whole town on Saturday, while these dreadful scenes were acting, will be better conceived than described. The Magistrates had tried every means of persuasion to no effect; large bills were stuck up requesting all persons to retire to their respective homes, to no purpose; nothing certain was known respecting the approach of the military; and numbers of the rioters, now joined by thieves and drunken prostitutes from every quarter, were, with blue cockades in their hats, in all parts of the Town, and in small bodies levying contributions on the inhabitants. There was scarcely a house-keeper that dared refuse them meat, drink, money, or whatever they demanded. The shops were mostly shut, business nearly at a stand, and every body employed in secreting or removing their valuables. Very happily, however, the body of the rioters, overcome with liquor and fatigue, lay all the night in the fields, round their conflagrations in the country, and did not come into the town. The first intelligence that was received of them on Sunday morning, was, that a party were gone to King's-wood, about seven miles off, where they burnt the Dissenting Meeting House and the dwelling-house for the Minister, and also the premises of Mr. Cox, a farmer, at Warstock. In the afternoon, accounts were also received that another party had assembled at Edgbaston Hall, the residence of Dr. Withering, which

place they visited the day before but left uninjured, after being regaled with the Doctor's liquor. They now, however, being instigated by abandoned women, notwithstanding the plentiful manner in which the liquor was dealt out to them, appeared determined to plunder the Hall; some of the rooms were pillaged, and they were even preparing, it is thought to destroy the place, when information was received that troops were approaching Birmingham. No sooner had the rioters notice of this, than the major part of them sneaked off in different directions, in bodies of ten, twelve, or more, together; and the few that at last remained were quickly driven off the premises by the neighbours.

Our readers will easily judge what a relief this certain intelligence of the approach of the Military must have afforded the alarmed and agitated minds of the inhabitants of the town. Thousands went out to meet them, and, about ten o'clock, two troops of the 15th regiment of dragoons, attended by the magistrates, entered this place amidst the acclamations of the people, and illuminations of the streets through which they passed. They halted at the Swan Inn, where the fatigued and fainting state of both horses and men evinced the exertions they had made for our relief. About seven o'clock that morning the Minister's express had arrived with orders for them to march hither. At half-past ten o'clock they left Nottingham, and, though the greater part of their horses had been hastily fetched from grass, such was their zeal in the service that they arrived at Erdington, within four miles of town (after a journey of upwards of fifty-three miles), a little after seven o'clock. Captain Polhill, who commanded the troops on this occasion (and to whom, as well as to the other officers and men, we are happy thus publicly to acknowledge our obligations), brought them the first forty miles without ever resting. Such a forced march, it will be supposed, could not be performed without much injury to the horses; and, one of them, a famous old horse that had been in the regiment eighteen years, died the next day. The arrival of the Military not only dissipated the apprehension of the inhabitants, but immediately restored tranquility to the town, in which there has been neither riot nor disturbance since.

On Monday the streets, near the officer's quarters, were somewhat incommoded by the populace; but they were only peaceful spectators. As to the mob, what few remained of them had taken their route towards King's Norton, Bromsgrove, and Hales-Owen, where split into small parties, they were guilty of some pillage of the farm houses, and laid the peasantry under contributions; and on Tuesday night, a body of them having assaulted Mr. Male's house, at Belle Vue, near the Leasowes, the Earl of Aylesford, with Justice Woodcock and a few of the light dragoons, hastened thither. The people of the neighbourhood had, however, before their arrival, overpowered the rioters, and ten of them were secured. Upon this his Lordship returned with the troops, and we believe that the lawless banditti, which had the two preceding days so much terrified the country, made their last appearance, in any numbers, here.

We must not omit to mention that several other houses in the neighbourhood of the town, besides those we have noticed as being destroyed, were assaulted and pillaged during the tumults, but which were saved from complete destruction, either by the exertions and persuasions of the neighbours, or by the gift of money or liquor. Among those that partially suffered were the houses of Mr. T. Russell, near Moseley; of Mr. Harry Hunt, at Lady Wood; of the Rev. Mr. Coates at the Five Ways; and Mr. Smith's house (Hay Hall). Mr. Jukes, having intimation that his house, near the Green Lanes, was to be attacked, very prudently, the night before, removed all his furniture, liquor, &c.,

took out his sashes and window frames, and conveyed whatever the rioters were likely to pull down to a place of security; so that when they arrived, either supposing another party had been before them, or not chusing to waste their labour on a place that afforded no plunder, they left it untouched, and by this manœuvre Mr. Jukes saved his habitation.

On Wednesday three troops of the 11th Regiment of Light Dragoons, and on Friday three troops of the 1st Regiment of Dragoon Guards, marched into the town. Colonel de Lancey arrived with an Aid de Camp, on Tuesday, from the King, to take command of the military; and such was his Majesty's anxiety to provide for the security of this neighbourhood, that he had given orders for four thousand troops to march to our relief from different quarters. Tranquility, however, being now restored, the progress of the greater part of them will be stopped.

Our Magistrates, the Rev. Dr. Spencer and Joseph Carles, Esq., have been unwearied in their official attentions during the whole of these tumultuous proceedings, and have been aided by the personal advice and attendance of the following Noblemen, Magistrates, and Gentlemen, of this and the neighbouring counties: The Earl of Aylesford, the Earl of Plymouth, Captain Finch, Sir Robert Lawley, Mr. Cecil, Mr. Moland, Mr. Digby, Mr. Holbeche, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Woodcock, &c.

Several of the rioters are taken, and more are known; and this day his Majesty's Justices will sit at the Swan Inn, to receive information respecting the riot. An eminent Counsel, with the Treasury Solicitor, and Mr. Justice Bond, are arrived from London, to assist them in their enquiries into the origin and cause of the late unfortunate transactions; so that (according to the expressions of one of the King's Ministers) "some proper and dignified measure may be pursued in consequence thereof, to show the sense of Government, and prevent the like evils in future." As many exaggerated accounts have appeared in the London Papers of the amount of the damage done by the late riots, some gentlemen have made a conjectural calculation of the losses sustained, from which they have reason to hope the amount of the whole is not 50,000/.

One of the rioters has been found in a field behind Mr. Ryland's house, dead, from excessive inebriety; and we are sorry to hear that Dr. Withering's books, philosophical apparatus, and valuable collections in natural history, suffered much by the hasty removal that was obliged to be made of them after his first alarm.

A report having been spread that the seat of Lord Beauchamp, at Ragley, was demolished by a mob, we are happy to contradict it; though, as they were apprehensive of some riotous proceedings, it was thought prudent to deposit, for a short time, his Lordship's papers, books, &c., in Arrow Church.

The Theatre, which, in consequence of the riots, has been shut since Wednesday se'nnight, opens this evening, and a Play and Entertainment will be performed for the benefit of an old inhabitant of this town; from which, we trust, few respectable families will be absent.

On the same date it was announced "That a Special Meeting of several of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the counties of Warwick and Worcester, will be held at nine o'clock this morning, at the Swan Inn, in Birmingham, to receive Information respecting the

late Riots; and all Persons that have it in their Power to give any Evidence relative thereto, are desired then and there to give their attendance. Birmingham, July 25, 1791."

Dr. Priestley at once left Birmingham for London, and on the 19th he addressed a calm, dignified, and manly letter to the "Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham." This letter has been frequently published, as well as the intemperate reply of an inhabitant, which appeared in the next *Gazette*. The Dissenters of the town returned their "grateful acknowledgments to all those members of the Established Church, who, in any manner, exerted themselves during the late riots in defence of their persons and property, more particularly to those who, in the true spirit of Christianity, received into their houses, and under their protection, many families of Dissenters who were obliged to leave their own Habitations; and also to all those who received and protected their goods. They trust that good Men of every Denomination will consider this Protection as highly honourable to the Humanity of those who gave it, and they think it to be more meritorious, as their generous Protectors did thereby expose themselves to Danger from a lawless mob, who wanted only Pretence for Depredation." William Hutton also published a letter, of which this is a copy :—

Birmingham, July 23, 1791.—It is a material Relief to that Calamity under which I labour to find, since my Return, every Man my Friend, except the People who composed the Mob of Plunderers, or wished to join them. I shall ever express an Obligation to those who preserved any of my Property from Destruction; but it gives me great Concern that much of it has been destroyed through a *Fear* of restoring it, when I have already declared to the world that I would receive it with gratitude. My Friends will add to the Obligation under which they have laid me, by restoring the lost Property as little damaged as possible, particularly the PRINTS and BOOKS, the value of which is upwards of a Thousand Pounds. Many of the Books are scarce, and in Sets; the loss of one diminishes the Value of the Remainder, and is an Injury which Time, Assiduity, or Money, can never repair. There is also lost, Plate, a Gold Watch, beaded Chain, with Gold Trinkets and Jewels to a considerable Amount, exclusive of Stock in Trade, Furniture, Apparel, Household Linen, &c. Should any suspected Articles be offered to Sale or Pawn, I shall be extremely obliged to those to whom they are offered to stop both Persons and Property till they give me Information. The Books, the Property of my Son, have generally the Arms on a Copper Plate, two Inches Square, pasted on the Inside of the Cover, with THOMAS HUTTON; and, if torn off, the Mark will remain.

W. HUTTON.

A Proclamation was issued by the King on the 27th, offering a reward of £100 for the discovery of the author of the "seditious" hand-

bill; and another offering the same reward each for the detection and conviction of those engaged in the riots. On August the first was published, price sixpence, "Loyalty and Humanity, or King and Church; a Poem, wherein the Proceedings and Publications of Churchmen and Dissenters in Birmingham, from the 14th to the 29th of July, 1791, are noticed; the Conduct of both Parties considered, the religious defenders of Church and King applauded, and their Instigators presented with a Laurel." This was printed and sold by J. Thompson, of Moor Street, and its motto was,

*"Amicus Plato,
Sed Magis Amica Veritas."*

The following notice explains the feelings of relief with which the inhabitants looked upon their deliverance from this calamity; and the report of the meeting shows how they displayed their gratitude on this occasion:—

Birmingham, August 8. 1791.—THE HIGH-BAILIFF, and many of his Friends, judging it proper that some public Testimony should be given of the Obligations which the Town lies under to the Nobility and Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood, in the Commission of the Peace, who so strenuously exerted themselves in endeavouring to suppress the late Riots, as well as to the Officers and Soldiers who came so expeditiously from Nottingham, and thereby saved many houses from Destruction: He requests a meeting of the principal Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood, at the HOTEL, on Friday next, at Eleven o'clock in the morning, to take the same into consideration.

We now give a copy of the resolutions passed at this meeting:—

Birmingham, August 12. 1791.—At a large and very respectable Meeting of the principal Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood, held this Day at the Hotel, agreeable to public Advertisement,

The HIGH BAILIFF in the Chair,

The following RESOLUTIONS passed UNANIMOUSLY:—

First,—That a Committee be appointed to prepare an humble ADDRESS to HIS MAJESTY, expressive of the deep sense which the Inhabitants of this town and neighbourhood entertain towards his Majesty's paternal care, manifested for their security during the late Riots.

Secondly,—That the thanks of this Meeting be presented by the Chairman to Joseph Carles, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Spencer, our acting Magistrates, for the Solitude they exhibited on the first intimation given them of disturbances likely to take place in this Town on the 14th of July last: and for their extreme vigilance and unwearied personal attention on that, and every subsequent day, till public Tranquility was happily restored.

Thirdly,—That a handsome Piece of Plate, of the value of One Hundred Guineas, be presented to each of our worthy Magistrates, Joseph Carles, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Spencer, as a grateful acknowledgment of their eminent services repeatedly experienced by this Town and neighbourhood, and especially during the late Riots; and that the Chairman be desired to procure and present the same to them.

Fourthly,—That the Chairman be also requested to present the Thanks of this Meeting to the Right Honourable the Earl of Aylesford, the Hon. Captain Finch, and Richard Moland, Esq., for their very early attendance on the morning of the 15th of July last, and for their strenuous Exertions, in Conjunction with Joseph Carles, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Spencer, to suppress the Riots, and fully to restore the Peace and Happiness of this Town and Neighbourhood.

Fifthly,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be likewise presented by the Chairman to the Right Hon. the Earl of Plymouth, Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., Robert Lawley, Esq., Henry Cecil, Esq., the Rev. Joseph Cartwright, ——— Steward, Esq., Thomas Holbeach, Esq., Henry Greswold Lewis, Esq., Wriothsley Digby, Esq., and Walter Woodcock, Esq., for their Attendance and ready concurrence in every measure likely to effect the Re-establishment of Peace and good order amongst us.

Sixthly,—That the Chairman be requested to express the very high Sense which this Town entertains of the exemplary Conduct and Zeal manifested by Captain Polhill and the other Officers and Soldiers of the Detachment of the 15th Dragoons, in the extraordinary forced march made by them of 56 miles for our relief, on the 17th of July, as well as their great vigilance in resting upon their Arms the whole of that night, notwithstanding the excessive fatigue they had undergone in the day.

Seventhly,—That the Chairman be requested to procure three elegant dress Swords, of the manufacture of Mr. Gill, of this Place, and present the same to Captain Polhill, Cornet and Adjutant Hilton, and Corporal Seymour, in Acknowledgment of the Essential Services rendered by them to this Town on that Occasion ; and that the Sum of One Hundred Pounds be placed in the Hands of Captain Polhill, to be by him distributed amongst the non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers who formed the above detachment, in such a manner as he may think proper.

Eighthly,—That a Subscription be immediately entered into by this Meeting for the above purposes, and the monies collected be deposited in the Hands of the Chairman.

Ninthly,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be also presented by the Chairman to Colonel Delaney, appointed by His Majesty to command the Troops sent for the Relief of this Town, for the very exemplary zeal with which he executed the important Trust reposed in him on that occasion, as well as to all the Officers and Soldiers under his command.

Tenthly,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be also presented to Captain Archibald of the Marines, Captain Hardy of the 19th Light Dragoons, Lieutenant Smith of the Marines, Captain Maxwell, and all the other Officers upon the Recruiting Service, with the Soldiers under their Command, for their great Exertions and personal Service on the late occasion.

Eleventhly,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Messrs. Wallis and Fearon, the present Constables, for their activity and diligence during the Riots.

Twelfthly,—That the Committee, for the purpose of preparing an address to His Majesty and bringing to effect the other Resolutions of this Meeting, be composed of the following gentlemen, viz : the Chairman, the Rev. Mr. Curtis, the Rev. Mr. Price, the Rev. Mr. Young, the Rev. Mr. James, the Rev. Mr. Burn, Dr. Gilby, Dr. Pearson, Mr. Peter Capper, Mr. Theodore Price, Mr. John Brooke, and Mr. William Wallis Mason.

The Committee having accordingly withdrawn, and framed an address to His Majesty ; and on their return the same being read by the Chairman,

Resolved,

Thirteenthly,—That the Address is highly approved of by this Meeting ; and that Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., and Sir George Shuckburgh, Bart., Members for the County, be requested to present the same to his Majesty.

Fourteenthly,—That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the High Bailiff, for convening the Meeting, for his great Attention, and the very distinguished manner in which he hath filled the Chair.

Fifteenthly,—That these Resolutions, signed by the Chairman, be published in the Birmingham, London, and such other Papers as he may think proper.

WILLIAM VILLERS.

The *Address* to his Majesty lies at the Hotel for the Signature of the Inhabitants ; and the *Subscription Paper* is left at Mr. Pearson's, where those Gentlemen who wish to subscribe are requested to send their names.

At this Meeting Mr. Gill "very generously requested that he might be allowed to present the Committee with the swords intended for the Officers ; and Mr. Bisset also desired that he might be suffered to present to the Committee three gold medallions with suitable emblematic devices, intended likewise for the Officers, who came with such extraordinary expedition to our assistance."

There can now be little doubt but that there was much truth in Dr. Priestley's assertion that the Riots were caused by the High Church Party. They had inflamed the passions of the populace to the highest pitch. The Unitarians, with their great leader, had been held up to the abhorrence of their fellow citizens. Their liberal views in politics, and their opposition to orthodoxy in religion, had been imputed to them as crimes of the most pernicious kind. The Church party imitated only too well the example and conduct of the Roman Catholic Church, in making dissent the worst of sins. The Unitarians, however, were the especial object of these attacks, and Dr. Priestley, who was foremost in the battle, received the greatest number of blows. Prose was not sufficiently potent to please his assailants, and verse, blank and other, was called in to point the abuse, to heighten its effect, and to inflame the mob. Some of these pieces have come down to us, and we quote a specimen or two. The first is called

A POETICAL EFFUSION,*

On the Writings and Political Principles of Dr. Priestley.

Presumptuous man ! can thy electric flash

Oppose the great artill'ry of the sky,

* This bit of virulent abuse was written by Mr. J. Morfitt, a barrister, a scholar, and a gentleman. We shall have occasion to refer more fully to this author and his works in the second volume. The piece quoted above was published in Mrs. Pickering's volume of poems, together with several Church and King songs by the same writer.

And mock the rolling thunder ? Can thy streams
 Of philosophic sulphur dim the blaze
 Of light celestial ? Dares thy earth-born rant
 Disturb the Seraph Choirs, that ceaseless sing
 Their loud Hossanas to the Tri-une-God ?
 Child of the dust, thy optics cannot bear
 Terrestrial glory ; the meridian sun
 Dazzles thy sense : and yet thou dar'st invade
 The dread recesses of the highest heavens,
 Dark with excess of light, and furious tear
 The Eternal Son from his Eternal Sire.
 Thou rebel reas'ner ! canst thou comprehend
 His lowest works ? The smallest blade of grass
 That drinks the dew, is mystery to thee ;
 And canst thou level, with unfalt'ring hand,
 Reason's dim telescope at things divine,
 Incomprehensibly sublime ? Away
 To Bedlam's regimen, dark rooms, and straw !
 How dar'st thou question the Almighty's word !
 Can truth speak falsehood ? God himself deceive ?

With giant arm, that wars with truth and heav'n,
 The glorious pyramid of English law
 Thou gladly would'st reverse, and crush the Crown
 Beneath the people's overwhelming base.
 Vain thought ! Like Egypt's, the stupendous pile
 Shall stand, the lasting wonder of the world.

In vain dost thou affect the tender bleat
 Of bleeding innocence : we see the wolf,
 Hungry and grim, that, should the shepherds sleep,
 Would leap the fence, and desolate the fold.
 No wonder thy audacious hands assail
 All earthly dignities, that dare invade
 Heaven's awful constitution ; wrest the crown
 Eternal from the Pow'r that gave the breath,
 Thus loudly to blaspheme, contemner vile
 Of what is sacred deem'd in earth and heav'n,
 Bridle thy dragon lips, nor let thy smoke
 Ascend for ever." " Troubled ocean," cease
 Thy factious foam, nor " cast up " endless " mire."

Pure was the breeze that fans this " Seat of Arts,"
 'Ere tainted by thy breath. In ev'ry street
 The voice of labour sung away its cares ;
 The Church and Sectaries harmonious breath'd
 The genuine spirit of paternal love :
 But when thy puritanic scowl appear'd,

The heav'ns grew dark, and thy familiar fiend
 Flam'd in the pulpit, thunder'd from the press,
 'Till all was uproar, and just vengeance hurl'd
 Sedition's Temples smoking to the ground.

Birmingham, 1791.

The bitterness of this blank verse "effusion" was far exceeded by the one in rhyme. It is evidently written "ironical," but it expresses the opinion held by the vast majority of the people respecting this eminent man.

ODE.

Addressed to the Rev. Dr. Priestley.

"*Tantum Religio potuit saudere bonorum.*"—LUCR.

Priestley avaunt ! shrink from yon blaze,
 That faith and loyalty displays ;
 The brilliant deed I sing,
 To Aylesford I tune my lyre,
 Exult, and hail that patriot fire
 Lit up for Church and King.

His sacred spirit Bonner shed,
 It fell on Horsley's mitred head ;
 Gave Burke the grace to turn
 To Heaven our new Elijah's cry,
 And vengeful wrath bursts from the sky,
 A Priest of Baal to burn.

See "Friends and fellow Churchmen, join,
 Skill'd in the royal art to coin—
 From thence such ardour rose !
 Great gain—from Cæsar's head imprest
 On copper—fir'd each grateful breast
 To blast his trait'rous foes.

O'er all the land dull torpor crept
 Whilst, drown'd in tears, Religion wept,
 And felt indignant shame ;
 Till courtly Birmingham awoke,
 And prov'd her zeal in fire and smoke—
 Sacheverel bless'd the flame.

No more Dissenters shall combine
 To quaff up treason with their wine,
 And Gallia's freedom prize,
 The Church and Crown she basely awes,
 And madly spurns Britannia's laws,
 Tythes—Game Acts—and Excise.

Perturbed Spirits rest—be sage,
 And learn to dread the Church's rage.
 Heard ye her trumpet sound !
 Her Godly sons she can inspire
 And touch their hallow'd lips with fire,
 To breathe combustion round.
 Bigots you cry, with fury rise,
 "Inflam'd by every spark that flies,
 From any hot Divine !"
 Then zeal its latent heat displays,
 As putrid waters catch the blaze,
 And from corruption shine.
 The slander's yours ;—be this our song,
 That Kings and Queens can do no wrong.
 Let fools for changes fight :
 All Revolutions we forswear,
 And breathe a fix'd—true Tory air,
 Which turns the red rose white.
 Let vaunting France vain emblems bear
 To deify Rousseau—Voltaire !
 Nor dread th' avenging rod ;
 But with St. Edmund let us sing,
 "They who abjure both Pope and King,
 Can ne'er believe in God."

It was believed that Church and King could be served by such weapons as these. The muse of the day was not over scrupulous in her language. In our next example of the riot poetry, also written by the prolific Mr. Morfitt, Priestley is called "faction's darling child ;" and the happy state of England is placed in contrast with the unhappy condition of revolutionary France.

CHURCH AND KING.

While o'er the bleeding corpse of France
 Wild anarchy exulting stands,
 And female fiends around her dance,
 With fatal lamp cords in their hands ;

CHORUS.

We Britons still united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.
 Poor France ! whom blessings cannot bless,
 By too much liberty undone ;
 Defect is better than excess ;
 For having all is having none.
 Let Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

True freedom is a temp'rate treat,
 Not savage mirth nor frantic noise ;
 'Tis the brisk pulse's vital heat,
 And not a fever that destroys.
 Let Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

The Gallic lilies droop and die,
 Profan'd by many a patriot knave ;
 Her Clubs command, her Nobles fly,
 Her Church a martyr—King a slave.
 Let Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Yet Priestley, Faction's darling child,
 Enjoys this sanguinary scene,
 And celebrates, with transports wild,
 The wrongs, miscall'd the rights, of men.
 But Britons still united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Thy puritanic spleen assuage,
 Polemic Priest ! restrain thine ire !
 Nor with such idle, 'idiot rage
 Against the Church thy pop-guns fire !
 For Britons will united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Of trains of powder preach no more ;
 Vain is thy force, and vain thy guile ;
 To God and Kings their rights restore,
 Nor This blaspheme, nor Those revile !
 For Britons will united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

The mob that late disgrac'd our streets,
 'Twas thy pernicious tenets rais'd ;
 And Ryland's—Taylor's—beauteous seats,
 Reproach'd thy doctrines as they blaz'd.
 Let Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

While pillow'd on his people's breast,
 Our Sov'reign sleeps secure, serene,
 Unhappy Louis knows no rest,
 But mourns his more unhappy Queen.
 Let Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

He finds his Palace a Bastile,
 Amidst the shouts of liberty ;

Doom'd every heartfelt pang to feel,
 For merely striving to be free.
 Lét Britons, then, united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Go, democratic demons, go !
 In France your horrid banquet keep !
 Feast on degraded Prelates' woe,
 And drink the tears that Monarchs weep !
 While Britons still united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Our Church is built on truth's firm Rock,
 And mocks each sacrilegious hand ;
 In spite of each electric shock,
 The heav'n-defended steeples stand.
 While Britons true united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Old British sense and British fire
 Shall guard that freedom we possess ;
 Priestley may write, and Payne conspire,
 We wish no more and fear no less.
 While Britons still united sing,
 Old England's glory, Church and King.

Birmingham, August, 1791.

Verse was employed on the Liberal as well as on the Tory side. The Revolution had its laureates as well as the friends of order. The next poem is addressed to Liberty, and blanks are left in some of the lines, which we have attempted to supply ; these words are printed in brackets :—

ODE TO LIBERTY.

Thy real friends, O Liberty !
 Must gaze on France with ecstasy ;
 Must hold that day for ever dear,
 Which closed a despot's proud career ;
 Must venerate that wondrous deed,
 Which millions from their shackles freed :
 Which shews the world's anointed things,
 How puny, when oppos'd, are kings !
 And which, in terms all pow'rful, bids mankind
 Burst their degrading chains, and be what heav'n design'd.

Yes, Liberty ! thy friends sincere,
 Must Gallia's dauntless sons revere ;
 And tho' again an envious crew,
 With tythe and benefice in view ;

Who far and wide their slanders fling,
 And raise the cry of Church and King !
 Tho' meetings blaze—tho' mansions fall—
 And one vast ruin frowns on all—
 Yet, undismay'd, they still maintain thy cause ;
 Still brand the [Church's] sway, and [England's] partial laws.

Let the infuriate rabble rise,
 And awful flames illumine the skies ;
 Let Priests, exultant view the blaze—
 Then to the mob deal—pence and praise ;
 Let Magistrates, with snail-like haste,
 Attempt to stay th' infernal waste ;
 Let pious [Carles] such deeds to check,
 From justice screen the ruffian's neck ;
 Such wrongs as these but sprinkle freedom's fire,
 And speed that grand reform which patriot souls desire.

The following spirited song was popular with the friends of the Revolution :—

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1779.

O'er the vine cover'd hills, and gay regions of France,
 See the day-star of liberty rise,
 Thro' the clouds of detraction unwearied advance,
 And holds its new course thro' the skies.
 An Effulgence so mild, with a lustre so bright,
 All Europe with wonder surveys ;
 And from deserts of darkness, and dungeons of night,
 Contends for a share of the blaze.
 Let Burke, like a bat, from its splendour retire,
 A splendour too strong for his eyes ;
 Let pedants and fools his effusions admire,
 Enrapt in his cobwebs, like flies ;
 Shall phrenzy and sophistry hope to prevail,
 Where reason opposes her weight,
 When the welfare of millions is hung in the scale,
 And the balance yet trembles with fate ?
 Ah ! who midst the horrors of night would abide,
 That can taste the pure breezes of morn ?
 Or who that has drunk of the chrystalline tide,
 To the feculent flood would return ?
 When the bosom of beauty the throbbing heart meets,
 Ah ! who can the transport decline ?
 Or who that has tasted of Liberty's sweet,
 The prize, but with life, would resign ?

But 'tis over—high Heaven the decision approves—
 Oppression has struggled in vain :
 To the Hell she has formed Superstition removes,
 And Tyranny bites his own chain.
 In the records of Time a new era unfolds—
 All nature exults in its birth—
 His creation benign the Creator beholds,
 And gives a new charter to Earth.
 O catch its high import, ye winds as ye blow !
 O bear it, ye waves, as ye roll !
 From regions that feel the sun's vertical glow,
 To the farthest extremes of the pole.
 Equal Rights, Equal Laws to the nations around,
 Peace and Friendship its precepts impart,
 And wherever the footsteps of man shall be found,
 May he bind the decree on his heart.

The following advertisement shows what means were employed to inflame the mob, and confirms the suspicion that the whole affair was under the guidance of people who knew well enough what they were doing :—

Birmingham, August 22, 1791.

WHEREAS it now appears that amongst other insidious and unwarrantable Practices made use of during the late Riots, to delude the Populace, and instigate them to acts of Violence and Destruction, *Letters were forged, charging the Dissenters with a treasonable design to overthrow the present happy Constitution of this Kingdom*, and pretending that the whole body of them were combined together, and had appointed to assemble on the 16th of August "*to burn the Churches, blow up the Parliament, cut off the head of the King, and abolish all Taxes:*" And whereas it is now well known, that such forged Letters were pretended to be found among the Papers of the Rev. Dr. Priestley and William Russell, Esq., and the words above quoted formed part of one of the forged Letters, which were brought and read by two Persons on Horseback at Showell Green, the House of William Russell, Esq., whilst the same was in Flames, in order to instigate the Rioters to further Acts of Violence. Notice is hereby given, that the Protestant Dissenters of Birmingham, in addition to the Reward of One Hundred Pounds graciously offered by his Majesty for discovering the Instigators of the late horrid violences, will give a further reward of One Hundred Pounds for the Discovery of the Person or Persons who wrote the said forged Letters, or any one of them, so that he or they may be convicted thereof, and brought to Punishment.

THOMAS LEE, jun.,
 Secretary to the Committee of Protestant
 Dissenters in Birmingham.

The Rioters were tried—if such a perversion of justice can be called a trial—at Warwick in August of the same year, before Mr. Baron Perryn. There were twelve persons arraigned, and although in most

of the cases there could be no doubt of their guilt, only four were convicted. The slightest thing was sufficient to ensure an acquittal. One of the prisoners, named Joseph Careless, was seen with a long rail knocking down the bricks of a bow window belonging to Mr. Ryland's house. He was also seen driving away the pigs; but his sister-in-law swore that he was driving them away to save them from being burnt, and the jury found him not guilty. Of the twelve prisoners tried at Warwick, five were found not guilty, two were acquitted, one was not tried on account of his youth, and four were found guilty. Of these four, only two were executed. It was considered by those in power, and by the vast majority of the nation, that the rioters had served the King rather than committed a crime. The spirit of the address to the rioters, already quoted, in which they are requested to desist from their burning and plundering, not so much because it was a crime in itself, as because it would injure the King, the country, and their cause, more than their victims, was the spirit which inspired the nation. Hutton relates an anecdote which is worth quoting. "A gentleman," he says, "soon after this, hunting with Mr. Corbett's fox-hounds, was so sure of killing the fox, that he cried, 'Nothing but a Birmingham Jury can save him.'"

A few events connected with, and arising out of these deplorable riots may here be grouped together :—

August 15, 1791.—On Thursday, Mr. Lane, grocer, of Bull-street, who has fell a sacrifice to the excessive fatigue he underwent during the Riots; and we have to add to this melancholy catalogue, that a man belonging to a recruiting party in this town has likewise died, in consequence of the injuries he at that time received.

Died, on Friday afternoon, much lamented, Mr. Thomas Ashwin, Japanner, of Paradise Row, in this Town. The death of this Gentleman (who has left an amiable wife and nine young children to deplore his loss) was occasioned by a wound he received on the head from one of the rioters during our late unhappy disturbances.

To the Printers of Aris's BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

October 24, 1791.

Mr. Pearson,—Having received an anonymous letter, of which the following is an exact Copy, and which appears to come from a real Friend to Truth and the Establishment, I should be exceedingly ready to satisfy both him and the Public that the Members of the Establishment, both Clergy and Laity, were so far from raising or encouraging the late Riots, that they instantly took every Means in their Power to suppress them; but as I do not think it becoming to give any particular Answer to an anonymous Letter, I shall request you to publish this, and thereby inform the Writer of the Letter, that if he

will favour me with his Name I will lay before the public such Facts as I flatter myself will fully convince them that the Members of the Establishment were by no means the Occasion of the late Riots in this Place and Neighbourhood.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Birmingham, October 27, 1791.

W. VILLERS.

(COPY.)

TO MR. VILLERS, HIGH BAILIFF, BIRMINGHAM.

London, October 13, 1791.

Sir,—The Birmingham Paper is a proof of the Attention you show to the Interests of the Town, therefore, a Stranger, without Apology, addresses you. Dr. Priestley's *Letters* insinuate the late Troubles were raised by the Establishment, against him and the Dissenters. It is presumed, those who know the Town will know to the contrary; but it is a Truth, the Dissenters in distant Counties speak with much Acrimony on the same subject. Surely a *calm* and *dispassionate* Answer might be given.—*Justice* and the Credit of the Town call for it.

I am, Sir,

A WELL-WISHER TO THE TOWN.

November 14, 1791.—The large building, fronting Livery-street in this town, which was built for an Amphitheatre, has been taken for the use of the Two Societies of the Old and New Meeting-houses (until their several places of worship, which were entirely demolished during the late riots, can be rebuilt), and the same has been certified to, and registered by the bishop of this diocese, pursuant to the Act of Parliament, 1 Wm. and Mary, ch. 18. Yesterday it was opened for divine service. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Coates. He took his text from St. John iv, 23, 24. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." From these words the preacher, in a nervous, manly, and persuasive stile, proved that it regarded not in what building the worshippers assembled—it was their sincerity only that made their homage acceptable to the Deity.

Our townsman, Mr. M. D. Hill, in his admirable address, to which allusion has already been made, furnishes us with the following anecdotes illustrative of the popular feeling at this time:—

"The years following the riot of 1791 witnessed various displays of hostile sentiment. In preparation for a Municipal dinner shortly after that event, of which a member of the powerful and wealthy party opposed to French principles bore the cost, the list of guests accustomed prior to the outbreak to be invited on public occasions had been sedulously cleared of adverse elements. By inadvertence, however, the name of Dr. Parr was retained, and the sturdy divine, although he must have surmised that he would be the only representative of his opinions, duly obeyed the summons. The cloth being drawn, the Chairman proposed, as the Doctor no doubt expected, the toast 'Church and King.' Parr instantly started to his feet, proclaiming in a stern voice his dissent. 'No, Sir,' said he, 'I will not drink that toast. It was the cry of Jacobites; it is the cry of incendiaries. It means a Church without the Gospel, and a King above the Law!' What was the effect of this bold utterance except to prove the courage of the speaker I know not; but I think we shall all agree it was a rebuke well deserved and well applied.

Party conflicts, however, were not always either so bitter or so energetic. I remember a worthy old clergyman, the curate of St. Martin's, who, though without preferment, felt himself invested, in right of his cloth, with a panoply of dignity, which placed him but little below a bishop. He wore a suit of black, not in quite such good preservation as could have been wished, surmounted by a wig and shovel hat of surprising amplitude. Anecdotes were ripe among dissenters of his enmity towards their body. One of them, it is said, who by some good fortune had acquired the privilege of accosting the churchman when they met in their walks, put to him one day, with all proper humility, this question,—‘Dr. Croft, I wish to know if it can be true (I hope and trust it is not) that you have said you will never bury a dissenter!’ ‘Sir,’ was the answer, ‘it is false. I am ready to bury you all!’”

The bill of costs was made up in 1792, and amounted to £35,095 13s. 6d.; and in 1793 an order was made to reimburse the sufferers. Again every obstacle was thrown in the way of those who had been plundered. Almost every claim was disputed, and every item contested; and, but for the energy and determination of the Earl of Aylesford, years would doubtless have elapsed before even the miserable portion of the claims allowed would have been paid. Hutton says, “They recovered in their various trials, which were conducted at the expense of £13,000, the sum of £26,961 2s. 3d.” The Trustees of the New Meeting House, having lost their license, were not able to sue, but the King was pleased, upon the application of Mr. Russell to Mr. Pitt, to grant a warrant upon the Treasury for £2,000.

And so ended these disgraceful riots, and the disgraceful trials which followed them. Birmingham has since repented of these days of bigotry and violence. It still remains, however, for us to prove that repentance by the only way now in our power—by providing a permanent memorial of the noblest and most richly endowed of the victims of that shameful outbreak of fanaticism and ignorance—a monument in honour of the memory of Dr. Priestley.

APPENDIX.

THE WORD BIRMINGHAM. MR. FREEMAN'S LETTER.

BIRMINGHAM.—A remark in the *Athenæum* of August 25th to the effect that Bromwycham is possibly the proper name of Birmingham, induces me to submit the following remarks to the editor and the public. The names of two British places mentioned by Ptolemy, A.D. 120, bear a certain resemblance to the word Birmingham ;—namely, Bremmium and Brameogenium. But he places the former among the Otadeni on the banks of the Tyne, and the latter among the Ordovices, in North Wales. It is, therefore, impossible that either of these can have been the original of the present Midland metropolis, so far as the authority of Ptolemy can be relied on. Richard of Cirencester puts Bremenium among the Brigantes, but even they were north of the Humber. This verbal coincidence may, no doubt, be absolutely discarded. The word Birmingham is so thoroughly Saxon in its construction, that nothing short of positive historical evidence would warrant us in assigning any other than a Saxon origin to it. The final syllable *ham*, means a home or residence, and Bermingas would be a patronymic or family name, meaning the Berms (from Berm, a man's name, and ing or iung, the young, progeny, race, or tribe). The word dissected in this manner would signify the home or residence of the Berms; and there can be little question that this is its true meaning. Hutton, the historian, who was quaint and humorous, but far from learned or profound, has grounded a theory on the vulgar nickname of the place, Brummagem. Noticing that there are places adjoining named West Bromwich, Castle Bromwich, Little Bromwich, and Bromford, (Brom meaning a broom, *wic* or *wich* a village, the Latin vicus), and that writers in former times have often spelt the name Bromwicham, Bromicham, &c., he pronounces this the original name of the place, and interprets it the Home in the Broom Village. But this is a gross misconception of the principles of Saxon nomenclature. *Wic* or *wich* is a very frequent terminative to compound names of places in England, as are various others, such as burgh, den, field, forth, gate, hurst, stead, ton, wood, and worth, each having a well known meaning. Now, there is not a single place in England the name of which is constructed of *ham* appended to a compound word ending in *wich*, or in any other of these ordinary terminatives. No such name as Sandwichham, Fordwicham, Norwicham, Droitwicham, &c., is to be found in the kingdom. Bromwicham is, therefore, a coined word, and may be dismissed as bad Saxon. Indeed *ham* almost always, if not quite, implies the home of some one. Bermengeham, is the name given to the town in the Doomsday Book, which is the oldest historical record in which it is mentioned, and this name, with various spellings is adopted wherever the place is spoken of in any legal or official document. We find a noble family de Bermingham, in 1154, a lawsuit connected with Byrmingeham, and numerous other circumstances. Where the word is written Bromwicham, or Bramwicham, it is always in documents not professing exactness in this particular, of a comparatively recent date, and in which the loose spelling of the age would be sure to prevail.

Such is an entry in his accounts by a village churchwarden in 1497, incidental mention of the place by Leland, Clarendon and other writers. To shew what little value attaches to these documents in a question of this kind, the following quotations may be made from the diary of Sir Roger Twisden :—"18 Sept., 1655, I was at Aldyngton Court." "16 Sept., 1658, I was at Aldynton Court." "1659, I was at Aldington Court." Here he spells in three different ways the name of a place in Kent, where he went to attend the Dens Court on business connected with his own property in the neighbourhood. The evidence of Doomsday Book and other authentic instruments is not to be superseded by the casual orthography of writers such as this, especially when it would lead us to the adoption of a word in violation of Saxon usage, as displayed in the name of every other town in the kingdom. As Bermingham appears undoubtedly to have been the original name of the place, let us next enquire whether a satisfactory meaning can be assigned for the word. Hutton draws a fanciful picture of Birmingham, as the seat of metal works before the Roman era, which would of course imply that it was of British origin. This is all imagination. Doomsday Book mentions no ironworks either in Staffordshire or Shropshire, although it does in other counties. It is, therefore, probable that none existed up to that date, and that Birmingham took its name from some Saxon or Danish adventurer, named Berm, or Beorn, who acquired possession of the woodlands, pastures and corn-fields, which then constituted its only source of revenue. Beormingeham, the home of the Berms, was probably the first name it bore. Who were the Berms? It is evident they were a tribe of some importance, since they have left their names in at least nine counties. Thus, we have Birmingham in Warwick and Bedford; *Birm*-ington variously spelt in Warwick, Hants, Devon, Wilts, and Derbyshire; *Barm*-ing in Kent; *Barms*-ton in Yorkshire and Durham; *Berm*-ondsey in Surrey; *Berms*-ley in Stafford and Yorkshire, *Berms*-plet in Hampshire. In the entire absence of historical record, we can only use conjecture respecting this extensive tribe of Berms, and the following may perhaps be a warrantable guess. The modern Russian province called Perm, was formerly known as Byarmia, and still more anciently as Beormas. May not a tribe from this district have found its way, in the early migrations of nations, first to the coast of the Baltic or North Sea, and thence to England? There is certainly no improbability in this supposition, and it would clearly account for the homes, places, leas, and towns of the Berms to be met with so extensively in this country. It is an instructive coincidence that Beormas has become converted into Perm, by the assimilation to modern usage which has softened Beormingeham into Birmingham. It may also be mentioned that there are Klint Rocks near St. Petersburg, and Clent Hills, near Birmingham, but I am not able to assign any importance to this coincidence.

JAMES FREEMAN.

Birmingham, 4th September, 1855.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY WAYS OF SPELLING BIRMINGHAM.

The subjoined list was compiled, many years since, by an eminent local Antiquary, [Wm. Hamper, F.S.A.] now deceased, who found authorities for every variation, except the first, third, and fifth, which are taken from Hutton. About forty-nine are from MSS., and the remainder from printed volumes. Probably the publications of the Record Commission, issued since the compilation of this extraordinary catalogue, may supply additional variations.—SENEX.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Brumwycham | 37. Bermengham | 73. Brymmyngcham | 107. Birymincham |
| 2. Bermyngcham | 38. Berningham | 74. Birminghame | 108. Byrmincham |
| 3. Bromwycham | 39. Brummigham | 75. Birmyngchame | 109. Byrmyngcham |
| 4. Burnyngcham | 40. Burmyngcham | 76. Brymicham | 110. Byrmingcham |
| 5. Bermyngcham | 41. Bermynehelham | 77. Brymyngcham | 111. Birmingham |
| 6. Byrmyngcham | 42. Byrmegham | 78. (being the same | 112. Burnucham |
| 7. Birmingham | 43. Bormingham | as 38 is omitted) | 113. Brimidgeham |
| 8. Bromicham | 44. Berinyngcham | 79. Birmingecham | 114. Burmegam |
| 9. Brimingham | 45. Bremichem | 80. Bermicheham | 115. Burmycham |
| 10. Bermingham | 46. Brymyecham | 81. Brymingecham | 116. Brumegume |
| 11. Bermigham | 47. Brunningham | 82. Brymyncham | 117. Bremmencham |
| 12. Brymyncham | 48. Brumidgham | 83. Bryminham | 118. Brummidgham |
| 13. Bremisham | 49. Byrmingham | 84. Brimisham | 119. Bromidgome |
| 14. Bremiseham | 50. Byrmyncham | 85. Burmigam | 120. Bremingem |
| 15. Bermengeham | 51. Birmyincham | 86. Brimigham | 121. Burmegum |
| 16. Byrmincham | 52. Brumingham | 87. Birmingham | 122. Brumigam |
| 17. Bermicham | 53. Brumingham | 88. Buringham | 123. Brumicham |
| 18. Bermyincham | 54. Brummingham | 89. Beringham | 124. Brummingsham |
| 19. Bermingcham | 55. Birmicham | 90. Burmicham | 125. Burmingham |
| 20. Burmyincham | 56. Brinnicham | 91. Brammingham | 126. Bermingaham |
| 21. Bremingham | 57. Byrmegham | 92. Brumigham | 127. Bremingham |
| 22. Birmincham | 58. Bromincham | 93. Burmyngcham | 128. Bermingham |
| 23. Bromwycham | 59. Birmincham | 94. Bremecham | 129. Brymynham |
| 24. Byrmicham | 60. Bromisham | 95. Brimechame | 130. Brymygeham |
| 25. Birmyngcham | 61. Brimmingham | 96. Bermyngam | 131. Bornycham |
| 26. Bourmyneham | 62. Byrmyngcham | 97. Brymysham | 132. Brymyngiam |
| 27. Bernyngghem | 63. Barmegam | 98. Burmycham | 133. Brennyngcham |
| 28. Berkmynggham | 64. Burmedgeham | 99. Birmyngcham | 134. Brymmyngcham |
| 29. Birmygham | 65. Birmingham | 100. Burmicheham | 135. Brimyncham |
| 30. Brimicham | 66. Byrmingcham | 101. Bermgham | 136. Brymycham |
| 31. Bremicham | 67. Burmegham | 102. Berringham | 137. Brymyham |
| 32. Brimcham | 68. Burmigham | 103. Byrmigcham | 138. Brymyscham |
| 33. Burmingham | 69. Bormyngcham | 104. Brimmigham | 139. Burmygham |
| 34. Bromidgham | 70. Bremyngcham | 105. Brymingham | 140. Burymynham |
| 35. Brinningham | 71. Burmincham | 106. Brymyngcham | 141. Bernechagm. |
| 36. Brimingcham | 72. Byrmycham | | |

Aris's Birmingham Gazette, March 10, 1856.

LONGEVITY IN BIRMINGHAM.

The following instances of Longevity were extracted from Mr. Thomas Bailey's "Records of Longevity," by Mr. J. L. Phelps, of Lee Crescent, in this town :—

Mr. Bearley, of Birmingham, died 1796, aged 103.

Thomas Booty, of Birmingham, died 1800, aged 101. He was a tailor, and followed his employment regularly to within a few days of his decease.

Mr. Clarkson, of Birmingham, died 1773, aged 112.

Mr. Eyre, cutler, of Birmingham, died 1773, aged 107.

William Farr, of Birmingham, carrier to Tamworth, died 1770, aged 121. He had in the whole, children and grandchildren to the number of 144 persons; yet, strange to say, he survived all his numerous posterity. Finding himself thus heirless, he bequeathed the whole of his property, to the value of £10,000, to charitable uses.

Bridgett Howard, near Birmingham, died 1774, aged 101.

Thomas Hassell, of English Franklow, near Birmingham, died 1783, aged 104.

John Knowles, an inmate of the Workhouse, Birmingham, died 1797, aged 109.

John Key, of Edgbaston Mill, near Birmingham, died 1807, aged 107.

Elizabeth Linegar, widow, of Birmingham, died 1807, aged 102. Her life, it appears, had been chiefly past in the midst of severe toil and deep poverty.

Mary Lea, widow, of Birmingham, died 1819, aged 104.

Mrs. Moore, widow, of Birmingham, died 1755, aged 104.

William Oram, of Edgbaston, Warwickshire, died 1798, aged 93. For more than thirty years of his life he kept a public house, and was porter to the London Carriers in Edgbaston; at that time he was esteemed the strongest man in England.

Mrs. Pratt, widow, of Birmingham, died 1807, aged 102.

Mr. Plant, of Birmingham, died 1814, aged 107.

John Roberts, of Digbeth, Birmingham, died 1792, aged 103. He married three wives, by whom he had twenty-eight children; was nearly 80 when he married his last, by whom he had six children.

John Ranson, of Birmingham, died 1816, aged 102.

Mary Sambrooke, widow, of Birmingham, died 1814, aged 104. She was in full possession of all her faculties, and so hearty as to be able to walk out by herself only three days before her death.

Maria Theresa Twist, widow, of Birmingham, died 1806, aged 103. She retained the use of all her faculties, mental and bodily, to the very close of her life; and what is worthy of notice in her case is, that at the age of 50 she was necessitated to adopt the use of spectacles; but after wearing them for 30 years her sight was so much improved that she was enabled to leave them off, as she could then see to read any ordinary sized type without their aid, and which improvement in her vision continued without deterioration to the close of her life.

To these the following may be added :—

Died lately, near 100, Thomas Rutter, News-carrier.—*Aris's Gazette*, January 22, 1781.

Delivering newspapers, indeed, would seem conducive to longevity, for in a number of the *Gazette*, for November, 1780, there occurs the following :—

Died last Saturday, aged upwards of 80, in Corbett's Alley, Benjamin Penn, who had been one of the distributors of the *Birmingham Gazette* more than twenty years, in which time he regularly travelled near 100 miles every week, and never suffered any illness till within the last fortnight, when catching cold, a fever ensued, which terminated in his death. A proper person will be appointed to succeed him.

And, finally, in *Aris's Gazette*, of November 20, 1837, there is this record of a man whose years exceeded those of any other inhabitant of whom I find trustworthy mention; for I cannot help suspecting that the age of a Mr. Clarkson and a Mrs. Johnson, of Deritend, who are asserted in the Annual Register of 1773 and 1792, to have attained respectively the ages of 112 and 120, are somewhat apocryphal :—

Died on the 12th ult., at his son's residence in this town, Mr. Thomas Blakemore, aged 105, father to Mrs. Marrian, of the Sea-horse, Buck-street. He formerly kept the old Bird-in-hand, in Dale-end, where he took in this newspaper in the days of Mr. Aris, the original proprietor, whose death stands recorded 76 years ago.—A FREEMASON.

In the *Universal Magazine* for 1792, the following paragraph occurs relative to Mr. John Roberts, mentioned in Mr. Phelps' list :—

August 4. Lately died, in Digbeth, near Birmingham, in the 103rd year of his age, John Roberts, who retained his faculties to the last, and followed his employment within a few weeks of his death. This extraordinary old man married three wives, by whom he had 28 children; he was nearly eighty when he married his last, and had six of the children by her. The old half-timbered house in which he lived was taken down in April, 1804.

Johnson, Mrs., of Deritend, Birmingham, aged 120.

Taylor, Thomas, of Birmingham, cobbler, was able to work at his trade till within a few weeks of his death, aged 103.

A True Relation of the Inhuman Cruelties Exercised by the Cavaliers at Birmingham, in Warwickshire.

To correct the many false Reports already spread abroad, and to prevent all false narrations for future, concerning the late surprisall and spoyling of the Towne of *Birmingham* in the County of *Warwick*. This ensuing relation of Passages, hath beene collected from the severall Informations of divers trusty and Intelligent Inhabitants of *Birmingham*, who were eye witnesses of, and sufferers under many the said calamities of that Towne, so farre as the truth of such turbulent distracted Occurrents can be yet discovered.

The Towne of *Birmingham*, perceiving that for their faithfull affection to King and Parliament, they had derived the hatred of Popish and prophane Malignants upon themselves; and that since the Noble Lord *Brooke's* death, these parts of the Country began to be much infested with divers Troopes of Robbers and Plunderers, whereby their persons

and estates were much indangered, resolved to Arme themselves and estates, and to main-
taine two Captains for the better Disciplining and ordering of their men to that end : But
whilst they were beginning to make some slight mounds and Breast-works for defence the
week before Easter last, information came that Prince *Rupert* with 1500 or 2000 men with
4 Drakes and 2 Sacres was upon his march at *Stratford* upon *Avon* and about *Henley* some
10 miles distant from *Birmingham*, where these forces hovered about 4 days, pillageing the
Country extreemly (as their manner is) *Birmingham* hoped they might passe by them, but
afterwards perceiving on Saturday night, that it was probable their designe was towards
Staffordshire, and that they would take *Birmingham* in their way ; The Minister of
Birmingham entreated the Captaines and Chiefs of the Towne, by no meanes to thinke
of such an impossible defence of themselves against 2000, themselves having scarce six
score Musqueteers in all the Towne, but rather to march away with all their Armes, and
to secure their Armes and persons, though their goods were hazarded, as a thing farre more
safe and rationall, which motion the Captaines and chiefe of the Towne readily imbraced,
but the middle and inferior sort of people, (especially those that bore Armes) would
by no means be drawn to leave the Towne, and so they all resolved to stand upon their
own guard, otherwise the chiefe of the Towne and the Captaines must have departed as
Cowardes, with great Contempt many scornes and curses.

On *Easter* Monday Prince *Rupert's* Forces approached to the Towne about 2 or
3 o'Clock in the Afternoone, at one end, presently assaulted it with great fury, discharging
their Musquets and great pieces onely about 100 Muskietiers opposing them (the rest
hiding themselves) which were also divided into several ends of the Town, and not many
in any one place, a good while the Muskietiers kept them off their Works, and drove them
back till they fired a thatched house, and burnt 2 or 3 houses at Towns end and
their Horse also broke into the fields and came in at the backsides of the Town through
Lake-meadow, which forced the Towns-men to retreat back into the Towne to charge
them, when they came up, when they slew some very considerable man who was presently
stripped of his rich garments, and wrapped in a gray coat, and a woman of theirs suborned
to lament for him as her husband, they called him *Adam a Bell*, but this losse so enraged
them that they presently burnt 2 or 3 houses to the ground, where they conceived he was
shot ; then they broke in so forcibly upon the few *men* in the *town* that they were forced to
scatter and fly for their *lives*. It is very remarkable that none of them were slaine or hurt
whiles they stood upon their Guard (as is credibly averred) till they scattered and were so
singled out. The Cavaliers rode up into the Town like so many Furies or Bedlams, the
Earle of *Denbigh* being in the Front, singing as he rode, they shot at every doore or
window where they could espy any looking out, they hacked, hewed or pistolled all they
met with, without distinction, blaspheming, cursing, and damning themselves most
hideously. Discovering a Troope of Horse, which was under the command of Captain
Greaves at the further end of the Town facing them, they pursued after them, who after a
little flight wheeled about, and most stoutly charged them through, and the Captaine
received five small wounds (which are now almost well :) In which charge the Ea.
of *Denbigh* was knockt off his horse, laid for dead, and his pockets rifled (though his
wounds not so mortall as to die presently) the rest of his horse were chased till they came
neere their own Colours, which was excellent service, for meane while most of the Townes
foot escaped away.

After which Captain *Greaves* retreated, and so advanced to *Lichfield*. Their Horse rode desperately round the Town, leaping hedges and ditches (wherein one is reported to break his neck) to catch the Townes-men; no madmen could ride more furiously. They slew in their frenzy as we are informed, about 14 in all, viz. *John Carter*, junior, *William Knight*, Glasier, *William Billingsley*, junior, *Joseph Rastell*, *William Turton*, Cutler, *Thomas* the Ostler at Swan, pistoled coming officiously to take their Horses, *Richard Hunt*, Cobler, *Henry Benton*, Labourer, *Samuel Elsmore*, Cutler, *William Ward*, Cutler, *Richard Adams*, Cobler, *Widdow Collins*, *Lucas* his Wife, and one Mr. *Whitchall*, a Minister, who hath bin long Lunatick, held Jewish opinions, and had layn in Bedlam and other prisons (some say) 16, some 22 yeares, and was lately come out; they comming to him asked him if he would have quarter, he answered to this (or like purpose) he scorned Quarter from any Popish Armies or Souldiers, whereupon they supposing him to be Mr. *Roberts* Minister of *Birmingham*, did most cruelly mangle and hack him to death, and found certain idle and foolish papers in his pocket, which they spared not to divulge (as they thought to the Roundheads infamy) and so went insulting up and down the Towne that they had quartered their Minister, out of whose bloody hands the Lord's gracious providence delivered him a little before the Towne was assaulted, and (blessed be God) hee is neither slaine nor hurt. All the considerable men escaped out of their snare, some 40 (they say) were taken prisoners, whereof scarce 20, of their own Towne, all inferior men, most of them their own favourers, and since for trifling sums of money they are released all, save 2 or 3 (as unworthy to be kept.)

Having thus possessed themselves of the Towne, they ran into every house cursing and damning, threatening and terrifying the poore women, most terribly, setting naked Swords and Pistolls to their breasts, they fell to plundering all the Towne before them, as well Malignants as others, picking purses and pockets, searching in holes and corners, Tiles of Houses, Wells, Pooles, Vaults, Gardens and every place they could suspect for money and goods, forcing people to deliver all the money they had. It is credibly believed they took from one *Thomas Peake*, a Councillor 1500 or 1300 *li.* at least, for he afterwards deeply professed that they had but left him in money 15*l.* 9*s.* and it was commonly known he had about the said sums lying cankering and rusting by him for these many Yeares, and yet to this day he would never voluntarily lend or give the least summe for the Relief of God's Ch: and the Land in the present saddest distresses, who being under *Oneals* hands (as we are credibly informed) when tidings of their minister's death was brought to him, replied (thinking thereby to curry favour) that it had bin well if he had bin killed 7 yeares ago. They have had divers Summes also from others, who have shewed small love to *King and Parliament*; tooke much money to protect people's Houses, and afterwards betrayed them, and set them on fire. It is conceived they had 3000*l.* in money from the Town. They beastly assaulted many Women's chastity, and impudently made their brags of it afterwards, how many they had ravished; glorying in their shame, especially the *French* among them, were outrageously lascivious and letcherous. They broke the Windowes, spoyled the goods they could not take away, and carried with them all the chiefe goods in the Towne, some having little left, some nothing but bare walls, some nothing but cloathes on their backs, and some stripped to their very shirts and left naked. That night few or none of them went to Bed, but sate up revelling, robbing, and Tyrannizing over the poore affrighted Women and prisoners, drinking drunke, healthing upon their knees, yea, drinking Healths to Prince *Ruperts* Dog.

Nor did their rage here cease, but when on next day they were to march forth of the Towne, they used all possible diligence in every Street to kindle fire in the Towne with Gunpowder, Match, Wispes of Straw, and Besomes, burning coals of fire &c., flung into Straw, Hay, Kid Piles, Coffers, Thatch, and any other places, where it was likely to catch hold; many of which attempts were successlesse and found after their departure, yea, it is confidently related, that they shot fire out of their Pistolls, wrapping lighted Match with Powder or some other ingredients in formes of slugs or bullets in brown Paper, which themselves confessed was the Lord *Digbys* devise, that English Firebrand; and lest any should save any of their goods they had left, or quench their flames, they stood with their drawne swords and Pistols, about the burning Houses, shooting and indeavouring to kill every one that appeared to preserve goods, and quench the fire, domineering at the flames, *Where's your Coventry now? Where's yours God Brooks now? You may see how God fights against you, &c.,* And when some of the Towne (whose purses had dearly purchased some interest among them) diswaded them from further firing, one of their owne men confessed that every *Quarter-master* was sworne to fire his owne Quarter, and that they durst not but doe it. By all which it notoriously appears, that their full intention was, and that by command (let them pretend what excuse they can) to burne downe the whole Towne to the ground, and doubtlesse would have done it, had not the Lord been the more mercifull: the houses burned were about 87. besides multitudes of Barnes, Stables, and other back buildings, belonging both to these dwelling Houses and to others that escaped the flames. Persons unfurnished and fallen into extreme distresse by this fire, 340. and upwards. So that many are quite undone by these barbarous cruelties, which are so much the more cruell, in as much as all these (except five or six Houses) were burnt in cool blood, the next day after they had sacked the Towne. And yet for all this the Souldiers told the Inhabitants that Prince *Rupert* dealt mercifully with them: but when they came back againe with the *Queenes Army*, they would leave neither Man, Woman, nor childe alive. Such are the Cavaliers mercies. This Towne (as is thought) was the first Towne in the Kingdom, that was generally plundered when the King marched from *Shrewsbury*, before *Keynton* battell and the first that in cold blood was barbarously fyred: However Prince *Rupert* hath got himself eternall honour, by conquering so mighty an enemy as 100. Musketiers, with so small an army as 2000. men. Since their departure Prince *Rupert* hearing that some in *Birmingham* cursed him for his Cruelties, had designed (as one of their owne Party informed) two Troopes of Horse to fire the rest of the Towne. Whereupon some of the Towne petitioning him not to doe it, he replyed he would not if they rebelled not again, nor returned to their vomit. Sithence they have caused one Mr. *Porters* Blademill in the Towne, to be pulled down, wherein swordblades were made and imployed, onely for the service of the Parliament, and so they were informed (which cost erecting about 100*l*) threatning if it were not pulled downe, the rest of the Towne should be burnt. For now they begin to be great Agents in Fire-Workes.

On their part it is probably believed there fell three very considerable Men, *viz.* Earle of *Denbigh* who died not long after of his Wounds, another as is supposed, was Sir *William AYRES*. The third as yet not knowne.

Certainly two Coffins were made in *Birmingham*, while the Earle of *Denbigh* was alive; and many common Souldiers are supposed to be slaine, some suspected to be buried in the Breast-workes ditch they entred, which they laid flat, and charged that none

should meddle with it upon paine of death, and when they came into the Towne, they cursed at the Round-heads, and swore *they shot, as if they had been shooting at Sparrowes, scarce ever missed Man or Horse.* They tooke away two Cart load of wounded Men, about 12 in a Cart, when they went away. Now they have made *Birmingham* a woeful spectacle to behold, a thorow Faire for Thieves and plunderers; the rich are woefully wasted and spoyled multitudes, almost quite beggered, and undone; it is thought 20000*l.* cannot repair their *losses*, their own Malignant neighbours rage at the well-affected like mad men, their minister is driven from home, debarred from all imployment and deprived of all his maintenance; besides his many losses by fire and plundering, and till those parts be cleared small hopes of his safe return, being so much maligned and threatned by the Cavaliers, and the domineering anti-guard left in *Birmingham*. The People that are left are fed with such rayling Sermons as one *Orton* Curate to *Parson Smith* the ancient Pluralist can afford them, rankly tempered with the malignancy of his own distempered Spirit. And all well-affected People are forced to be absent from their habitations, to their excessive charge in this their low estate, for feare of surprizalls, large summes being proffered to apprehend them, especially those of better ranke. Yet they desire to bear all these crosses patiently and profitably take with joy the spoyling of all their goods, knowing in themselves that they suffer in a good cause, and that they have in Heaven a farre better and more enduring substance.

Let all the Kingdome well consider *Birmingham* calamities and conclude what all are like to feele unlesse they maturely bestirre themselves to shake off the Cavaliers more then *Egyptian* yoke.

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